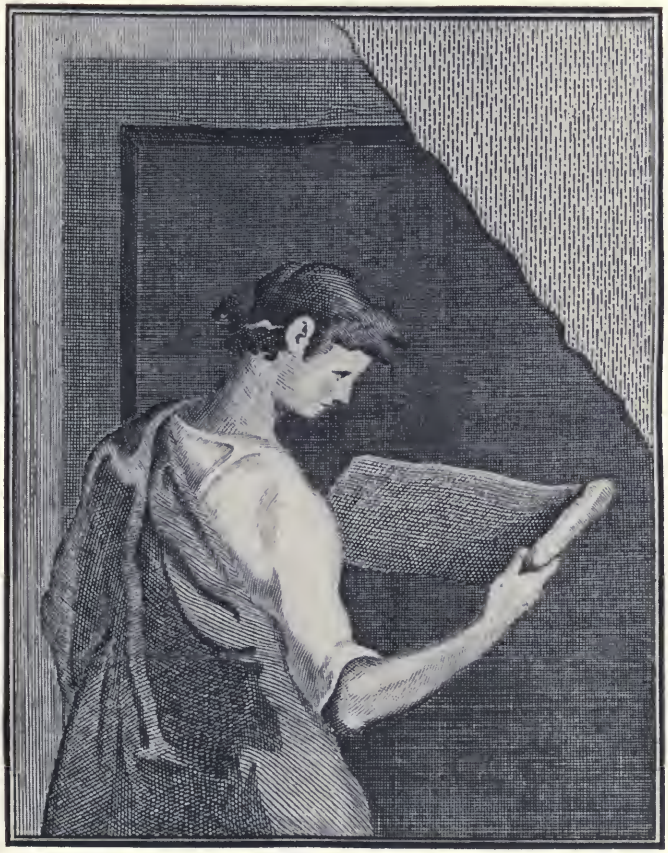
2|1



THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE LIBRARY

Halsted VanderPoel Campanian Collection

NAPLES

PORTA CAPUANA, NAPLES

NAPLES
PAST AND PRESENT

BY

ARTHUR H. NORWAY

AUTHOR OF "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN DEVON AND CORNWALL"
"PARSON PETER," ETC.

WITH FORTY ILLUSTRATIONS FROM WATER-COLOUR DRAWINGS
BY ARTHUR G. FERARD

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON
1901

THE GETTY CENTER
LIBRARY

TO MY FRIENDS

BARON AND BARONESS MARIO NOLLI

OF NAPLES, AND OF ARI, IN THE ABRUZZI

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

IN TOKEN THAT THOSE WHO ARE DIVIDED

BY BOTH SEA AND LAND

MAY YET BE UNITED IN THEIR LOVE

FOR ITALY

PREFATORY NOTE

I HAVE designed this book not as a guide, but as supplementary to a guide. The best of guide-books—even that of Murray or of Gsell-Fels—leaves a whole world of thought and knowledge untouched, being indeed of necessity so full of detail that broad, general views can scarcely be obtained from it.

In this work detail has been sacrificed without hesitation. I have omitted reference to a few well-known places, usually because I could add nothing to the information given in the handbooks, but in one or two cases because the considerations which they raised lay too far from the thread of my discourse.

I have thrown together in the form of an appendix such hints and suggestions as seemed likely to assist anyone who desires wider information than I have given.

A. H. N.

EALING, 1901

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

THE APPROACH TO NAPLES BY THE SEA 1

CHAPTER II

THE ANCIENT MARVELS OF THE PHLEGRÆAN FIELDS . . 21

CHAPTER III

THE BEAUTIES AND TRADITIONS OF THE POSILIPO, WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON VIRGIL, THE ENCHANTER . 49

CHAPTER IV

THE RIVIERA DI CHIAIA, AND SOME STRANGE THINGS WHICH OCCURRED THERE 68

CHAPTER V

THE ENCHANTED CASTLE OF THE EGG, AND THE SUCCESSION OF THE KINGS WHO HELD IT 85

CHAPTER VI

THE BARBARITIES OF FERDINAND OF ARAGON, WITH CERTAIN OTHER SUBJECTS WHICH PRESENT THEMSELVES IN STROLLING ROUND THE CITY 101

CHAPTER VII

PAGE

Chiefly about Churches—with some Saints, but more Sinners 121

CHAPTER VIII

A Great Church and two very Noble Tragedies . 143

CHAPTER IX

Vesuvius and the Cities which he has Destroyed—Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiæ . . . 178

CHAPTER X

Castellammare: its Woods, its Folklore, and the Tale of the Madonna of Pozzano 226

CHAPTER XI

Surriento Gentile: its Beauties and Beliefs . . 251

CHAPTER XII

Capri 273

CHAPTER XIII

La Riviera d' Amalfi and its Long-dead Greatness . 299

CHAPTER XIV

The Abbey of Trinità della Cava, Salerno, and the Ruined Majesty of Pæstum 327

Appendix 345

Index 357

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
The Porta Capuana . . .	*Frontispiece*
The Castle, Ischia	6
The Solfatara	29
Traces of Earthquake at Casamicciola	38
Lake Avernus	42
Pozzuoli and Island of Nisida	50
Scoglio di Virgilio	58
Palazzo di Donna Anna	65
Capri from the Castiglione	74
Castel dell' Uovo	96
Vault in Castel Nuovo	106
Porch of Santa Barbara, Naples	111
San Liberatore and Mountains towards Salerno . . .	125
Naples from the Harbour	139
Porto Tragara, Capri	150
I Faraglioni, Capri	164
Naples from Corso Vittorio Emanuele	178
Ruins of Cathedral at Casamicciola	190
Herculaneum	200
Temple of Apollo, Pompeii	210
Tombs of Pompeii	220
Castellammare from Quisisana	232
Castellammare from Monte Coppola	243

TO FACE PAGE

Vico Equense 253
Plain of Sorrento 258
Valley of Mills, Sorrento 265
Gateway of Capri 273
Capri and Punta di Campanella 290
Arco Naturale, Capri 296
Ravine of Furore 304
Atrani 306
Amalfi from Cappuccini Convent 307
Lion Fountain, Ravello 314
Ravello 319
Courtyard of Palazzo Rufolo, Ravello 323
Tower of Scarpariello, Minori 326
Tower of Majori 328
Convent of La Trinità at Corpodi Cava 330
Temple of Neptune, Pæstum 337
Basilica of Pæstum 342

NAPLES

PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER I

THE APPROACH TO NAPLES BY THE SEA

ON a fine spring morning when the sun, which set last night in gold and purple behind the jagged mountain chain of Corsica, had but just climbed high enough to send out shafts and flashes of soft light across the opalescent sea, I came up on the deck of the great steamer which carried me from Genoa to watch for the first opening of the Bay of Naples. It was so early that the decks were very quiet. There was no sound but the perpetual soft rustle of the wave shed off from the bow of the steamer, which slipped on silently without sense of motion. The Ponza Islands were in sight, desolate and precipitous, showing on their dark cliffs no house nor any sign of life, save here and there a seabird winging its solitary way round the crags and caverns of the coast. Far ahead, in the direction of our course, lay one or two dim, cloudy masses, too faint and shadowy to be detached as yet from the grey skyline which bounded the crystalline sparkles of the sea. And so, having strained my eyes in vain effort to discover the high peak of Ischia, I fell to wondering

why any man who is at liberty to choose his route should dream of approaching this Campanian coast otherwise than by the sea.

For Naples is the city of the siren—"Parthenope," sacred to one of those sea nymphs whose marvellous sweet singing floated out across the waves and lured the ancient seamen rowing by in their strange old galleys, shaped after a fashion now long since forgotten, and carrying merchandise from cities which thirty centuries ago and more were "broken by the sea in the depths of the waters" so that "all the company in the midst of them did fail." How many generations had the line of sailors stretched among whom Parthenope wrought havoc before Ulysses sailed by her rock, and saw the heaps of whitening bones, and last of all men heard the wondrous melodies which must have lured him too, but for the tight thongs which bound him to the mast! So Parthenope and her two sisters cast themselves into the sea and perished, as the old prediction said they must when first a mariner went by their rock unscathed. But her drowned body floated over the blue sea till it reached the shore at Naples, and somewhere near the harbour the wondering people built her a shrine which was doubtless rarely lovely, and is mentioned by Strabo, the old Greek geographer, as being shown still in his day, not long after the birth of Christ.

There is now but little navigation on these seas compared with the relative importance of the shipping that came hither in old days. Naples is in our day outstripped by Genoa, and hard run, even for the goods of southern Italy, by Brindisi and Taranto. The trade of Rome goes largely to Leghorn. If Ostia were ever purged of fever and rebuilt, or if the schemes for deepening the Tiber so as to allow

large vessels to discharge at Rome were carried out, we might see the port of Naples decline as that of Pozzuoli did for the selfsame reason, the broad facts which govern the course of trade being the same to-day as they were three thousand years ago. Even now it is rather the convenience of passengers and mails than the necessities of merchants which take the great ocean steamers into Naples. It is not easy for men who realise these facts to remember that the waters of the Campanian coast have more than once been ploughed by the chief shipping of the world. Far back in the dawn of history, where nothing certain can be distinguished of the deeds of men or nations, the presence of traders, Phœnician and Greek, can be inferred upon these shores. The antiquity of shipping is immense and measureless. Year by year the spade, trenching on the sites of ancient civilisation, drives back by centuries the date at which man's intellect began to gather science; and no one yet can put his finger on any point of time and say, "within this space man did not understand the use of sail or oar." The earliest seamen of whom we know anything at all were doubtless the successors of many a generation like themselves. It cannot be much less than a thousand years before Christ was born when Greek ships were crossing the sea which washed their western coasts bound for Sicily and the Campanian shores. Yet how many ages must have passed between the days when the Greeks first went afloat and those in which they dared push off toward the night side of the world, where the mariners of the dead went to and fro upon the sea, where the expanse of ocean lay unbroken by the shelter of any friendly island, and both winds and currents beat against them in their course, or even by coasting up and down the Adriatic set that

dreaded sea between them and their homes! Superstition, hand in hand with peril, barred their way, yet they broke through! But after what centuries of fearful longing,—curiosity, and love of salt adventure struggling in their hearts with fear of the unknown, till courage gained the mastery and the galleys braved the surf and smoke of the *planctæ*, the rocks that struck together, "where not even do birds pass by, no, not the timorous doves which carry ambrosia for Zeus, but even of them the sheer rock ever steals one away, and the father sends in another to make up the number."

Then the rowers saw the rock of Scylla and her ravening heads thrust forth to prey on them, while beneath the fig tree on the opposite crag Charybdis sucked down the black seawater awfully, and cast it forth again in showers of foam and spray. These fabled dangers passed, there remained the Island of the Sirens, which legend placed near Capri, where Ulysses passed it when he sailed south again; and so the wonderful tradition of the Sirens dominates the ancient traffic of mankind upon these waters, and the harbour where the shrine of Parthenope was reflected in the blue sea claims a lofty place in the realms whether of imagination or of that scholarship which cares rather for the deeds of men than for the verbal emendations of a text.

The shrine has gone. The memory remains only as a fable, whose dim meaning rests on the vast duration of the ages through which men have gone to and fro upon these waters. But here, still unchanged, is the pathway to the shrine — the Tyrrhene Sea, bearing still the selfsame aspect as in the days when the galleys of Æneas beat up the coast from Troy, and Palinurus watched the wind rise out of the blackening west. Since those old

times the surface of the land has changed as often almost as the summer clouds have swept across it. Volcanic outbursts and the caprice of many masters have wrought together in destruction; so that he who now desires to see what Virgil saw must cheat his eyes at every moment and keep his imagination ever on the stretch. Even the city of mediæval days, the capital of Anjou and Aragon, is so far lost and hidden that a man must seek diligently before he cuts the network of old streets, unsavoury and crowded, in which he can discover the lanes and courtyards where Boccaccio sought Fiammetta, or the walls on which Giotto painted.

But here, upon the silent sea, at every moment fresh objects are coming into sight which have lain unchanged under dawn and dusk in every generation. Already the volcanic cone of Monte Epomeo towers out of Ischia, a menace of destruction which not twenty years ago fulfilled itself and shook the town of Casamicciola in a few seconds into a mere rubble heap. It is a sad thing still to stroll round that once smiling town. Ruins project on every side. The cathedral lies shattered and untouched; there is not enough money in the island to rebuild it. The visitors, to whom most of the old prosperity was due, have not yet recovered from the attack of nerves brought on by the earthquake. But there remains wonderful beauty at Casamicciola and elsewhere on Ischia; the "Piccola Sentinella" is an excellent hotel; some day, surely, the lost ground will be recovered, and prosperity return.

The new town lies gleaming on the flat at the foot of the great mountain. Far away towards my right Capri, loveliest of islands, floats upon the sea touched with blue haze; and there, stretching landwards, is the mountain promontory of Sorrento, Monte St.

Angelo towering over Monte Faito, and the whole mass dropping by swift, steep slopes to the Punta di Campanella, the headland of the bell, whence in the old days of corsairs the warning toll swung out across the sea as often as the galleys of Dragut or of Barbarossa hove in sight, echoing from Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, and many another watch-tower of that fair and wealthy coast, while the artillery of the old castle of Ischia, answering with three shots, gave warning of the coming peril. Even now I can see that ancient castle, standing nobly on a rock that seems an island, though, in fact, it is united with the land by a low causeway; and it comes into my mind how Vittoria Colonna took refuge from her sorrows there, spending her widowhood behind the battlements on which she had played with her husband as a child. Doubtless the two children listened awestruck on many a day to the cannon-shots which warned the fishers. Perhaps Vittoria may even have been pacing there when, as Brantôme writes, a party of French knights of Malta came sailing by with much treasure on their ship, and hearing the three shots took them arrogantly for a salute in honour of their flag, and so, thinking of nothing but their dignity, made a courteous salute in answer, and kept on their way. Whereupon the spider Dragut, who at that moment was sacking Castellammare, just where the peninsula joins the mainland, driving off as captive all those men or women who had not fled up into the wooded hills in time, swooped out with half a dozen galleys, and added the poor knights and their treasure to his piles of plunder.

Many tales are told about that castle, so near and safe a refuge from the turbulence of Naples. But already it is dropping astern, and the lower land of Procida usurps its place, an island which in the

CASTLE OF ISCHIA

days of Juvenal was a byword of desolation, though populous and fertile in our own. The widening strait of water between the low shore and the craggy one played its part in a tale as passionate, though not so famous, as that of Hero and Leander. For Boccaccio tells us that Gianni di Procida, nephew and namesake of a man whose loyalty popular tradition will extol until the end of time, loved one Restituta Bolgaro, daughter of a gentleman of Ischia; and often when his love for her burnt so hotly that he could not sleep, used to rise and go down to the water, and if he found no boat would plunge into the black sea, swim the channel, and lie beneath the walls of Restituta's house all night, swimming back happy in the morning if he had but seen the roof which sheltered her. But one day when Restituta was alone upon the shore she was carried off by pirates out of Sicily, who, wondering at her beauty, took her to Palermo and showed her to King Federigo, who straightway loved her, and gave her rooms in his palace, and waited till a day might come when she would love him. But Gianni armed a ship and followed swiftly on the traces of the captors, and found at last that Restituta was in Palermo. Then, led by love, he scaled the palace wall by night and crossed the garden in the dark and gained the poor girl's chamber, and might have borne her off in safety had not the King, suspecting that all was not well, come with torches in the darkness and discovered Gianni and cast him into prison, where he lay till he was sentenced to be taken out and burned at the stake in the Piazza of Palermo together with the girl who had dared to flout the affection of a king. And burned they would have been had not the great Admiral Ruggiero di Loria chanced to pass that way as

they stood together at the stake and known Gianni as the nephew of that great plotter who conceived the massacre of the Sicilian Vespers, whereby the crown of Sicily was set upon the head of Aragon. Straightway he hastened to the King, who forthwith released Gianni and gave him Restituta, and sent both home laden with rich gifts to Ischia, where they lived happy for many a year, till they were overcome at last by no worse fate than that which is reserved for all humanity whether glad or sorry.

No man can prove this story true; but it is at least so happily conceived as to be worth credence, like others told us by the same immortal writer, who, though a Florentine, knew Naples well, and doubtless wove into the *Decameron* many an anecdote picked up in the taverns which survives now in no other form. For there was no Brantôme to collect for us the gossip of the days when Anjou drove out Hohenstaufen from this kingdom; and if we would know what happened on the coast in those tragic and far-distant times we must take the tales set down by Boccaccio for what they may be worth.

I am not sure that Gianni, the hot-passioned lad who used to swim this strait by night, does not emerge out of the darkness of the centuries more clearly than his greater uncle—that mighty plotter who, using craft and guile where he had no strength, is fabled to have built up a conspiracy and engineered a massacre which has no parallel save in the St. Bartholomew. Yet it is not to be judged without excuse like that foul act of cold-blooded treachery, but was in some measure an expiation of intolerable wrongs, as may be discovered even now by anyone who will study the plentiful traditions of that March night when eight thousand French

of every age and either sex perished in two hours, slain at the signal of the vesper bell ringing in Palermo. That bloodshed split the kingdom of the two Sicilies in twain. It did more: it scored men's minds with a memory so deep that even now there is no child in Sicily who could not tell how the massacre began. To men then living it appeared a cataclysm so tremendous that they must needs date time from it, as from the birth of Christ or the foundation of the world. In documents written full four centuries later the passage of the years is reckoned thus; and in Palermo to this day the nuns of the Pietà sing a litany on the Monday after Easter in memory of the souls of the French who perished on that night of woe. So memorable was the deed ascribed by tradition to the plotter, Giovanni di Procida, lord of that little island which is already slipping past me out of sight.

The steamer slips on noiselessly as ever. Procida falls away into the background, with its old brown town clinging to the seaward face of a precipitous cliff; and I can look down the Bay of Baiæ, where in old Roman days every woman who went in a Penelope came out a Helen, and almost catch a glance at Cumæ, where Dædalus put off his weary wings after that great flight from Crete which no man since has contrived to imitate. There lies the Gate of Hell down which Æneas plunged in company with the Sibyl; and round it all the land of the Phlegrean fields, heaving and steaming with volcanic fires. There too is the headland of Posilipo, where Virgil dwelt and where he wrought those enchantments concerning which I shall have much to say hereafter; for though Virgil is a poet to the world at large, he is a magician in the memory of the Neapolitans. And who shall say their tradition is not true?

Next, sweeping round towards my right hand in a perfect curve, comes the shore of the Riviera di Chiaia, once a pleasant sandy beach, broken midway by the jutting rock and island on which stood the church and monastery of San Lionardo. It is long since church and island disappeared, and few of those gay Neapolitans who throng the Via Caracciolo, that fine parade which now usurps the whole seafront from horn to horn of the bay, could even point out where it stood. In these days the whole shore is embowered in trees and gardens skirting the fine roadway; and there stands the wonderful aquarium, which has no equal in the world, and where the wise will spend many afternoons and yet leave its marvels unexhausted.

My eyes have travelled on to the other horn of this fine bay, and are arrested by what is surely the most picturesque object in all Naples. For at this point the spine or backbone of land which breaks the present city into two, leaving on the right the ancient town and on the left the modern, built along the pretty shore of which I have just spoken,—at this point the ridge sweeps down precipitously from the Castle of St. Elmo on the height, breaks off abruptly in the sheer cliff of the Pizzo-Falcone, "The Falcon's Beak," and then sends jutting out into the sea a small craggy island which bears an old hoary castle low down by the water's edge. On this grey morning the sea breaks heavily about the black reef on which the castle stands, and the walls, darkened almost to the colour of the rock itself, assume a curious aspect of vast age, such as disposes one to seek within their girth for some at least among the secrets of old Naples. Nor will the search be vain; for this hoary fortress is Castel dell' Uovo, "The Castle of the Egg," so called, if we may lend an ear to Neapolitan tradition, because Virgil the Enchanter built it on an egg,

on which it stands unto this hour, and shall stand until the egg is broken. Others again say that the islet is egg-shaped, which it is not, unless my eyes deceive me; and of other explanations I know none at all, so that any man who can content himself with neither of these may resign himself to contemplate an unsolved puzzle for as long as he may stay in Naples.

Apart, however, from the wizard Virgil and the idle tale of the enchanted egg, there is something so arresting in the sight of this ancient castle thrust out into the sea that I cannot choose but see in it the heart of the interest of Naples. It is by far the oldest castle which Naples owns, and as its day came earliest so it passed the first. Castel Nuovo robbed it of its consequence, both as a royal dwelling and a place of arms; and now the noisy, feverish tide of life that beats so restlessly from east to west through the great city finds scarce an echo on the silent battlements of the Egg Castle, where Norman monarchs met their barons and royal prisoners languished in the dungeons. Inside the walls there is nothing to attract a visitor but memories. Yet those gather thick and fast as soon as one has crossed the drawbridge, and there is scarce one other spot in Naples where a man who cares for the past of the old tragic city can lose himself more easily in dreams.

But again the steamer turns her course a little, and suddenly the Castel dell' Uovo slips out of sight, the old brown city passes across my line of vision like a picture on the screen of a camera oscura when the lens is moved, and I am gazing out beyond the houses across the wide rich plain out of which the vast bulk of Vesuvius rears itself dark and tremendous, towering near the sea. There are other mountains far

away, encircling the plain like the walls of some great amphitheatre, but they are beyond the range of volcanic catastrophe, and stood unmoved while the peaks of Vesuvius were piled up and blown away into a thousand shapes, sometimes green and fertile, the haunt of wild boars and grazing cattle, at others rent by fire and subterranean convulsion so as to give reality to the most awful visions which the imagination of mankind has conceived concerning the destruction which befell the sinful cities of the plain.

The plain is the Campagna Felice, a happy country, notwithstanding the perpetual menace of the smoking mountain, which time after time has convulsed the fields, altered the outline of the coast, and overwhelmed cities, villages, and churches. Throughout the last eighteen hundred years a destruction like to that which befell the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii has been overtaking hamlets and buildings of less note. The country is a palimpsest. What is now written on its surface is not a tithe of what was once inscribed there. In 1861 an earthquake at Torre del Greco made a fissure in the main street. Those who dared descend it found themselves in a church, long since buried and forgotten. So it is in every direction throughout the Campagna Felice. The works of man are overwhelmed in countless numbers by the ejections from Vesuvius, and the green fields of beans and lupins which stretch so pleasantly across the wide spaces between the Sarno and the Sebeto cover the ruins of innumerable homes.

It seems strange that a land exposed to such great and constant perils should be densely populated. The coast is lined with towns, all shining in the sun, and the first graceful slopes of Vesuvius itself are studded with white buildings, planted here and there in apparent oblivion of the floods of red-hot

lava which have so often forced their way down the inclines towards the sea. There must be many dwellers in those towns who saw the lava break out from new vents in 1861 among the cultivated fields. Yet the fields are cultivated still, and in time of eruption the peasants will continue working in the vineyards within a few hundred yards of the crawling stream, knowing well how often its progress is arrested by the cooling of the fiery mass. There is, moreover, the power of the saints to be considered. How often has not San Gennaro arrested the outbreaks, and brought peace to the frightened city! On the Ponte della Maddalena he stands unto this day, his outstretched arm, pointing to the mountain with a gesture drawn from the mimic language of the people, bids it "Halt!" And then the fertility of the volcanic soil! Vesuvius, if a rough friend, is a kindly one. He may drive the people to their prayers from time to time, which is no great harm! but, if a balance be struck, his benefits are as many as his injuries, and the peasants, looking up, as they hoe their fields, at the coiling wreaths of copper-coloured smoke which issue from the cone, are content to take their chance that death may some day meet them too in a cloud of scorching ashes as it did those who dwelt in Pompeii so very long ago.

The great steamer is already near her moorings. The western or newer half of Naples is hidden by the hill, and I have before my eyes only the densely peopled ancient city, a rabbit warren of tortuous and narrow streets, unsavoury and not too safe, yet full of interest if not of beauty, and possessing a picturesqueness which is all their own. One salient feature only arrests the eye wandering over this intricate mass of balconies and house-fronts—the handsome steeple of the Carmine, a church sorely

injured and defaced, but still abounding in romance. For there lies the boy-king Conradin, slaughtered by Charles of Anjou in the market-place just outside; and there, too, the fisherman Masaniello met his end, after a trick of fortune had made him ruler of Naples for eight days. There is no church in all the city so full of tragedies as this, which was founded by hermits fleeing from Mount Carmel twelve hundred years ago, and which ever since has been close to the heart of the passionate and fierce-tempered people dwelling round its walls.

I do not doubt there was a time when travellers, arriving at Naples by sea, found themselves greeted by persons of aspect more pleasing than those who accost the astonished pilgrim of to-day. There was surely an age when the lazzaroni were really picturesque, when they lay on the warm sand in the sunshine, while the bay resounded with the chant of fishermen, the light-hearted people beguiling their unbounded leisure with the tuneful strains of "Drunghe, drunghete," of "Tiritomba," or even the too familiar "Santa Lucia." It cannot be that travellers lied when they wrote of the amazing picturesqueness of the Neapolitans, that they painted brown purple, and put on their spectacles of rose as they approached the land! I wish I had those spectacles; for indeed the aspect of the quays and wharves of Naples is not attractive, while the people who throng the boats now pushing off towards the steamer are just such a crowd of expectant barterers as one may see wherever a great steamer touches. In the stern of the first stands a naked boy, brown and lithe. His accomplishment is to dive for pence, which he does with singular dexterity, cramming all the coins as he catches them into his mouth, which yet is not so full as to impede his bellowing like a bull in the effort to

attract more custom. Did I complain of the lack of music? I was hasty; for there comes a second boat, carrying two nymphs whose devotion to the art has caused them to forget the use of water, unless it be internally. One has a hoarse voice, the other a shrill one; and with smiles and antics they pipe out the cheapest of modern melodies, chanting the eternal "Funicoli, Funicola," till one wishes the writer of that most paltry song could be keelhauled, or taught by some other process of similar asperity how grave is the offence of him who casts one more jingle into the hoarse throats of the street musicians of to-day. If I flee to the further side of the steamer and stop my ears from the cacophony, my face is tickled by the foliage of huge nosegays thrust up on the ends of poles from a boat so low in the water that I cannot see it. The salt air grows heavy with the scent of violets and roses. None of my senses is at peace.

But in another hour the landing was happily accomplished. The recollection of the mob through which one struggled to the quay, the noise, the extortion, and the smells had faded away into the limbo of bad dreams, and I was free to go whither I would in the small portion of the day remaining and taste whichever sight of Naples pleased me first. There is nothing more bewildering to a stranger than to be turned loose in a great city with which he is imperfectly acquainted. I looked east towards the Carmine; but the handsome campanile lay far from the centre of the city. I gazed before me, up a long straight street which cleft the older city with a course as straight as any bow shot, the house fronts intricate with countless balconies and climbing plants. It is the Strada del Duomo; but I knew it to be new through all its lower length, and it leads into the

very heart of the dense old town, where, lost in a maze of vicoli, I could never grasp the broad and general aspect of this metropolis of many kings.

At that moment I remembered the hill on which the Castle of St. Elmo stood; and turning westwards along the street which borders the quays, I came out in no great distance on the Piazza del Municipio, bordered on the further side by the walls and towers of Castel Nuovo, that old royal castle of Anjou and Aragon, which saw so many tragedies wrought within its walls, and holds some still, as I shall tell in time, for the better persuasion of any who may be disposed to set down the accusations of history as distant and vague charges, which cannot nowadays be brought to the test of sight. Before my eyes rises the white priory of San Martino topping the hillside high above the town, and it is to that point that I am hastening ere the gold light of the afternoon fades off the bay, and the grey shades of the early dusk rob the islands of their sunset colours. It is a long climb up to the belvedere of the low white building. The Neapolitans believed in days not long distant that vast caverns of almost immeasurable extent branched out laterally from the dungeons of St. Elmo and ran down beneath the city even to Castel Nuovo, making a secret communication between the garrisons of the two fortresses on which the security of Naples most depended. The story is not true. The vaults of St. Elmo do not reach so far, and are not more extensive than the circuit of the castle. But indeed these hillsides on which Naples lies are pierced so frequently by caverns, so many tales are told of grottoes known and unknown in every spine of rock, that the wildest stories of mysterious passages have found ready credence; and there are doubtless many

children, old and young, in Naples who believe that one may walk beneath the earth from St. Elmo to Castel Nuovo no less firmly than they credit the existence of vast caverns filled with gold and jewels lying underneath Castel dell' Uovo, guarded for ever from the sight of man by the chafing of the waves.

Naples presents us with a strange blend of romance and common sense—the modern spirit, practical and useful, setting itself with something like the energy of the old Italian genius towards the gigantic task of acquiring the arts of government, and turning a people enslaved for centuries into one which can wield the hammer of its own great destinies. "L' Italia è fatta," said Massimo d'Azeglio, "ma chi farà ora gli Italiani?" It was the question of a patriot, and it may be that it is not wholly answered yet. The most careless of observers can see that some things still go wrong in Italy, that the Italians are not yet wholly made, and it is the easiest as it is the stupidest of tasks to demonstrate that thirty years of freedom have not taught the youngest nation what the oldest took eight centuries to learn. It galls me to hear the supercilious remarks dropped by strangers coming from a country where serious difficulties of government have not existed in the memory of man, the casual wisdom of critics who look around too carelessly to note the energy with which one by one the roots of evil are plucked up, and the refuse of the long tyranny cleared away. I am not writing a political tract; but I say once for all that the recent history of Italy can show more triumphs than its failures; and the day will surely come when the indomitable courage of her rulers shall purge the country of those cankers which for centuries ate out her manhood.

"We do not serve the dead—the past is past.
God lives, and lifts his glorious mornings up
Before the eyes of men awake at last,
Who put away the meats they used to sup,
And down upon the dust of earth outcast
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,
Then turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act."

Dear prophetess and poet, who once from Casa Guidi sang so bravely of the future, kindling the love of Italy in many a heart where it has since grown into a passion,—it is coming true! It may be that fulfilment loiters, but Heaven does not disappoint mankind of hopes so great as these. They are of the sort with which God keeps troth. The child who went by singing "O bella libertà, o bella!" does not flute so sweetly now he is a man, but his hands have taken hold, and his heart is set on the greatness of his motherland.

The sun lies thick and hot in the Toledo, that long and crowded street which is the chief thoroughfare of Naples. It is hotter still when, having toiled as far as the museum, I turn off along the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele, which winds along the hillside, giving at each turn grand views across the town and harbour towards Capri shining in the west. A little way down the Corso is a flight of steps, long, tortuous and steep, yet forming much the pleasantest approach to the white priory whither every visitor to Naples goes once at least towards the hour of sunset. As one mounts, the city drops away, and the long semicircle of hills behind it rises into sight, green rounded hills, bearing on their summits palms which stand out sharp and dark against the sky. With every convolution of the stairs one sees more and more of the great plain out of which Vesuvius rises,—the Campagna Felice, a purple flat, stretching from the base of the

volcano as far as that mountain chain which marks the limit of its power. Out of the mountains comes a fresh cool wind, and all the city sparkles in the sun.

So I went up among the housetops till at length I reached an open space bounded by a rampart whence one looked down upon the town. On the further side a gateway gave admission to a court-yard, and that again to a corridor of the old priory, through which a guide led me with vain pointings toward the chamber containing the "Presepe," a vast model of the scene of the Nativity. Mary sits upon a height under a fragment of an old Greek building; while all the valleys are filled with the procession of the kings. Their goods are being unloaded from the troops of asses which bore them. In the meadows sheep are grazing, cows are being milked; and the sky is filled with choirs of angels. It is an ingenious, theatrical toy, but not half so pretty as the sunset, which I came to see. So, with some indignation of my guide, I pressed on through an exquisitely cool arcaded courtyard of white marble, its centre occupied by a garden wherein palms and roses grew almost profuse enough to hide the ancient draw well, with its chain and bucket lying as if they waited for some brother told off by the Prior to draw water for the rest. In one corner of this courtyard a doorway gives admission to the belvedere, a little chamber with two windows, whereof one looks towards the plain behind Vesuvius, and the other gives upon Posilipo.

As I stepped out on the belvedere the sun was dropping fast towards Posilipo, and wide flashes of gold were spreading over all the cup-shaped bay. Far out at sea, between the two horns of the gulf, the dark peaks of Capri caught the light, and presently

the glow blazed more brightly in the west, and all the shores where Sorrento lies began to quiver softly in the sunset. Vesuvius was grim and black; a pillar of dark smoke mounted slowly from its summit, and stretched across the paling sky like a banner floating defiantly from some tall citadel. Deep down beneath me lay the white city, a forest of domes and house-fronts which seemed at first impenetrable. But ere long the royal palace detached itself from the other buildings, and I could distinguish Castel Nuovo, with its old round towers, looking very dark and grim, while on the left a forest of domes and spires rose out of the densely crowded streets which have known so many masters and have allured conquerors from lands so very far away. A faint brown haze crept down from the hilltops, the first touch of evening chilled the air, but the seaward sky was marvellously clear, and the wide bay gleamed with gold and purple lights.

CHAPTER II

THE ANCIENT MARVELS OF THE PHLEGRÆAN FIELDS

IT is a morning of alternate sun and shadow. The clouds are flying low across the city, so that now one dome and now another flashes into light and the orange groves shine green and gold among the square white houses. All the high range of the Sorrento mountains lies in shadow, but on the sea the colours are glowing warm and bright, here a tender blue, there deepening into grey, and again, nearer into shore, a marvellous rich tint which has no name, but is azure and emerald in a single moment. Away across the crescent of the gulf a crowd of fishing boats are putting forth from Torre del Greco or Torre dell' Annunziata. Even at this distance one can see how they set their huge triangular sails and scatter, some one way, some another, searching each perhaps for his favourite volcanic shoal; for the largest fish lurk always in the hollows of those lava reefs which have from time to time burst out of the bottom of the bay. Some, perhaps, are sailing for the coral fishery upon the coast of Africa, to which great numbers go still in this month of April out of all the harbours beneath Vesuvius, though the profits are not what they were, and the trade is falling upon evil days. As for the mountain, he has cleared himself of clouds, and from his summit a heavy coil of smoke uncurls itself lazily

and spreads like a pennant stretching far across the sky.

All these things and more I have time to notice while I trudge along above the housetops of the city, those flat roofs named *astrici* which are such pleasant lounges on the summer evenings when the blue bay is dotted over with white sails and the shadows deepen on the flanks of Vesuvius or the distant line of the Sorrento coast. At length the road approaching the ridge of hill whose point forms the headland of Posilipo drops swiftly, and I find myself in face of a short ascent leading to the mouth of the very ancient grotto by which, these two thousand years and more, those who fared from Naples unto Pozzuoli have saved themselves the trouble of the hill.

It is absolutely necessary to pause and consider this hill, to which so much of the rare beauty of Naples is to be attributed. For the moment I set aside its legends and traditions, and turn my attention to the eminence itself. It is a cliff of yellow rock, whose consistency somewhat resembles sandstone, evidently worked without much difficulty, since it has been quarried out into vast cavities. The rock is tufa. It is a volcanic product, and forms the staple not only of the headland, but also of all the site of Naples and the rising ground behind it up to the base of the blue Apennines, which are seen continually towering in the distance beyond Vesuvius.

Thus at Naples one may distinguish between the eternal hills and those which have no title to the name. Of the latter is Posilipo, formed as I said out of volcanic ash. That ash was ejected underneath the sea, and having been compacted into rock by the action of the water was upreared by some convulsion long since forgotten. It is an intrusion on the landscape—a very ancient one, certainly—but it has

nothing to do with the great mountain-chain which hems in the Neapolitan Campagna and ends at last in the Sorrento peninsula and Capri. All the most fertile plain which lies within that barrier was once beneath the sea, which flowed up to the bases of the mountains. There is no doubt about it. The rock of Posilipo contains shells of fish now living in the bay. From Gaeta to Castellammare stretched one wide inlet of the sea. But underneath the water volcanic ash was being cast out, as it is still at certain spots within the bay; the heaps of ash and pumice stone grew into shoals and reefs, were uplifted into hills, the sea flowed back from its uptilted bed, and the coasts of Naples and of Baiæ assumed some outline roughly similar to that which they possess at present.

Of course all this is very ancient history, far beyond the ken of written records, or even the faintest whisper of tradition, unless, indeed, in the awe with which ancient writers alluded to the Phlegræan fields, fabled in old time to be the gate of hell, we may detect some lingering memory of the horrible convulsion which drove back the sea, and out of its deserted bed reared up this wilderness of ash and craters. But speculations of this kind are rather idle. We had better turn towards the grottoes, which are, at least in part, the work of men whose doings on this earth are known to history. The one, of course, is wholly modern, a construction of our own age for the accommodation of the steam tramway; but the other, through which one walks or drives, is certainly as old as the Emperor Augustus, and has sometimes been supposed to possess an antiquity far greater than that.

It seems remarkable that the Romans should have esteemed it easier to bore through the cliff than to

make a road across the headland. Indeed, there were villas on Posilipo, and there must surely have been a road of some sort from very early times, though it must be admitted that the founders of Naples did not go to Pozzuoli by the coast as we do. The old road climbed up directly from the city to Antignano, in the direction of Camaldoli, and kept along the ridge as far as possible. The coast road began to be used when the tunnel had been made. Still there must have been at least a track across the headland, and one wonders why the Romans did not improve it, in preference to boring underground. The ease with which the soft stone can be worked may account partially for their choice; but it is not to be forgotten that numberless caves, whether natural or artificial, exist in the cliffs at Posilipo and Pizzofalcone, giving occasion to the quick fancy of the Neapolitans to devise wild tales of buried treasure and of strange fierce beasts which guard it from the greed of men. The old legends of the Cimmerians who dwelt in dark caverns of the Phlegræan fields present themselves to mind in this connection, and without following out this mysterious subject further into the mists which envelope it, we may recognise the possibility that some among these caverns are far older than is commonly believed. Of course the preference of the Romans for tunnelling is explained at once, if we may suppose that by enlarging existing caverns they found their tunnel already partly made.

"I do not know," cries Capaccio, an ancient topographer who may yet be read with pleasure, though the grapes have ripened three hundred times above his tomb, "I do not know whether the Posilipo is more adorned by the grotto or the grotto by Posilipo." I really cannot guess what he meant. It sounds like the despairing observation of a writer

at a loss for matter. We will leave him to resolve his own puzzle and go on through the darkness of the ill-lighted grotto—no pleasanter now than when Seneca grumbled at its dust and darkness—sparing some thought for that great festival which on the 7th of September every year turns this dark highway into a pandemonium of noise and riot. The festival of Piedigrotta is held as much within the tunnel as on the open space outside, where stands the church whose Madonna furnishes a devotional pretext for all the racket. Indeed it is almost more wild and whirling within than without; for one need not become a boy again to understand that the joys of rushing up and down, wearing a fantastic paper cap, blowing shrieks upon a catcall, and brandishing a Chinese lantern, must be infinitely greater in the bowels of the hill than in the open air. Of course it is not only, nor even chiefly, a feast for children. All the lower classes rejoice at Piedigrotta, and often with the best of cause; for it happens not infrequently that the sky, which for many weeks has been pitiless and brazen, clouds and breaks about that time, the welcome rain falls, the streets grow cool again, and laughter rises from end to end of the reviving city.

Of Fuorigrotta, the unpleasing village at the further end of the grotto, I have nothing to say, unless it be to express the wish that Giacomo Leopardi, who lies in the church of San Vitale, lay elsewhere. That superb poet and fine scholar whose verses upon Italy not yet reborn rank by their majesty and fire next after those of Dante, and who yet could produce a poem rendering so nobly the solitude of contemplation as that which commences—

> "Che fai tu luna in ciel, dimmi, che fai,
> Silenziosa luna!"

this man should have lain upon some mountain-top, among the scent of rosemary and of fragrant myrtle, rather than in such a reeking dirty village as Fuorigrotta.

But I forget!—the compelling interest of this day's journey is not literary. A short walk from Fuorigrotta brings me to a point where the road turns slightly upward to the right, leading me to the brow of a hill, over which I look into a wooded hollow—none other than the Lago d'Agnano, once a crater, then a volcanic lake. Oddly enough, it is not mentioned as a lake by any ancient writer. Pliny describes the Grotta del Cane, which we are about to visit, but says not a word of any lake. This fact, with some others, suggests that the water appeared in this old crater only in the Middle Ages; though it really does not matter much, for it is gone now. The bottom has been reft from the fishes and converted into fertile soil. The sloping heights which wall the basin have a waste and somewhat blasted aspect; but I was not granted time to muse on these appearances before a smiling but determined brigand, belonging to the class of guides, sauntered up with a small cur running at his heels and made me aware that I had reached the entrance of the Dog Grotto.

I might have known it; for, in fact, through many centuries up to that recent year when it pleased the Italians to drain the lake, the life of the small dogs dwelling in this neighbourhood has been composed of progresses from grotto to lake and back again, first held up by the heels to be stifled by the poisonous gas, then soused head over ears in the lake with instructions to recover quickly because another carriage was coming down the hill. Thus lake and grotto were twin branches of one establishment, now dissolved. Perhaps the lake was the more important

of the two, since it is easier to stifle a dog or man than to revive him; and on many occasions there would have been melancholy accidents had not the cooling waters been at hand. For instance it is related by M. de Villamont, who came this way when the seventeenth century was very young indeed, that M. de Tournon, a few years before, desiring to carry off a bit of the roof of the grotto, was unhappily overcome by the fumes as he stood chipping off the piece he fancied, and tumbled on the floor, as likely to perish as could be wished by the bitterest foe of those who spoil ancient monuments. His friends promptly dragged him out and tossed him into the lake. It is true the cure found so successful with dogs proved somewhat less so with M. de Tournon, for he died a few days later. Yet had the lake been dry, as it is to-day, he would have died in the cave, which would surely have been worse.

The little dog—he was hardly better than a puppy —looked at me and wagged his tail hopefully. I understood him perfectly. He had detected my nationality; and I resolved to be no less humane than a countrywoman of my own who visited this grotto no great while ago, and who, when asked by the brigand whether he should put the dog in, answered hastily, "Certainly not." "Ah!" said the guide, "you are Englees! If you had been American you would have said, 'Why, certainly.'" I made the same condition. The fellow shrugged his shoulders. He did not care, he knew another way of extorting as many francs from me; and accordingly we all went gaily down the hill, preceded by the happy cur, running on with tail erect, till we reached a gate in the wall through which we passed to the Grotta del Cane.

A low entrance, hardly more than a man's height,

a long tubular passage of uniform dimensions sloping backwards into the bowels of the hill—such is all one sees on approaching the Dog Grotto. A misty exhalation rises from the floor and maintains its level while the ground slopes downwards. Thus, if a man entered, the whitish vapour would cling at first about his feet. A few steps further would bring it to his knees, then waist high, and in a little more it would rise about his mouth and nostrils and become a shroud indeed; for the gas is carbonic acid, and destroys all human life. King Charles the Eighth of France, who flashed across the sky of Naples as a conqueror, came here in the short space of time before he left it as a fugitive, bringing with him a donkey, on which he tried the effects of the gas. I do not know why he selected that animal; but the poor brute died. So did two slaves, whom Don Pietro di Toledo, one of the early Spanish viceroys, used to decide the question whether any of the virtue had gone out of the gas. That question is settled more humanely now. The guide takes a torch, kindles it to a bright flame, and plunges it into the vapour. It goes out instantly; and when the act has been repeated some half-dozen times the gas, impregnated with smoke, assumes the appearance of a silver sea, flowing in rippling waves against the black walls of the cavern.

With all its curiosity the Dog Grotto is a deadly little hole, in which the world takes much less interest nowadays than it does in many other objects in the neighbourhood of the Siren city, going indeed by preference to see those which are beautiful, whereas not many generations ago it rushed off hastily to see first those which are odd. For that reason many visitors to Naples neglect this region of the Phlegræan fields and are content to wait the natural occasion

THE SOLFATARA

for visiting the mouth of Styx, over which all created beings must be ferried before they reach the nether world. It is a pity; for, judged from the point of beauty solely, there is enough in the shore of the Bay of Baiæ to content most men. The road mounts upon the ridge which parts the slope of Lago d' Agnano from the sea. One looks down from the spine over a broken land of vineyards to a curved bay, an almost perfect semicircle, bounded on the left by the height of Posilipo, with the high crag of the Island of Nisida, and on the right by Capo Miseno, the point which took its name from the old Trojan trumpeter who made the long perilous voyage with Æneas, but perished as he reached the promised land where at last the wanderers were to find rest. The headland, which, like every other eminence in sight, is purely volcanic, is a lofty mass of tufa, united with the land by a lower tongue, like a mere causeway; and on the nearer side stands the Castle of Baiæ, with the insignificant townlet which bears on its small shoulders the burden of so great a name. Midway in the bay the ancient town of Pozzuoli nestles by the water's edge, deserted this long while by all the trade which brought it into touch with Alexandria and many another city further east, filling its harbour with strange ships, crowding its quays with swarthy sailors, and with silks and spices of the Orient. All that old consequence has gone now like a dream, and no one visits the cluster of old brown houses for any other reason than to see that which is still left of its ancient greatness. But before going down the hill, I turn aside towards a gateway on my right, which admits me to a place of strange and curious interest. It is the Solfatara, and is nothing more or less than the crater of a half-extinct volcano, which, having lain torpid for full seven centuries, is

now a striking proof of the fertility of volcanic soil, and the speed with which Nature will haste to spread her lushest vegetation even over a thin crust which covers seething fires. It was so once with the crater of Vesuvius, which, after five centuries of rest, filled itself with oaks and beeches, and covered its slopes with fresh grass up to the very summit.

Indeed, on entering the inclosure of the Solfatara, one receives the impression of treading the winding alleys of a well-kept and lovely park. The path runs through a pretty wood. The trees are scarcely more important than a coppice; but under their green shade there grows a wealth of flowers of every colour, glowing in the soft sunshine which filters through the boughs. There is the white gum cistus, which is so strangely like the white wild rose of English hedges, and the branching asphodel, with myriads of those exquisite anemones, lilac and purple, which make the woods of Italy in springtime a perpetual joy to us who come from colder climates; and among these, a profusion of smaller blossoms trailing on the ground, crimson, white and orange, making such a mass of colour as the most cunning gardener would seek vainly to produce. One lingers and delays among these woods, doubting whether any sight which may be shown one further on can compensate for the loss of the cool glades.

But already over the green coppice bare grey hill-sides have come in sight. They are the walls of the old crater, and here and there a puff of white smoke curling out of a cleft reminds me that the flowers are only here on sufferance, and that the whole hollow is in fact but waiting the moment when its hidden fires will break forth again, and vomit destruction over all the country. A few yards further on the coppice falls away. The flowers persist in carpeting the

ground; but in a little way they too cease, the soil grows grey and blasted. Full in front there rises a strange scene of desolation. The wall of the crater is precipitous and black. At its base there are openings and piles of discoloured earth which suggest the débris of some factory of chemicals, an impression which is driven home by the yellow stains of sulphur which lie in every direction on the grey bottom of the crater. From one vast rent in the soil a towering pillar of white smoke pours out with a loud hissing noise, and blows away in wreaths and coils over the dark surface of the cliff.

There is something curiously arresting in this quick passage from a green glade carpeted with flowers to the calcined ash and the grey desolation of this broken hillside. Of vegetation there is almost none, except a stunted heather which creeps hardily towards the blast hole. A little way off, towards the right, lies a level space sunk beneath the surrounding land, not unlike the fashion of an asphalt skating rink, so even in its surface that it resembles the work of man, and one strolls towards it to discover with what purpose anyone had dared to tamper with the soil in a spot where so thin a crust lies over bottomless pits of fire. But when one steps out upon the level flat, it reveals itself at once to be no human work. The guide stamps with his foot, and remarks that the sound is hollow. It is indeed, most unpleasantly so. He jumps upon it, and the surface quivers. You beg him to spare you further demonstrations, and walking gingerly on tiptoe, wishing at each step that you were safe in Regent Street once more, you follow him out towards the middle of this devilish crust, which rocks so easily and covers something which you hope devoutly you may never see. Midway in the expanse the fellow pauses in

triumph—he has reached what he is confident will please you. He is standing by a hole, just such an opening as is made in a frozen lake in winter for the watering of animals. From it there emerges a little vapour and a curious low sound, like that which a child will make with pouting lips. The guide grins, crouching by the opening; you, on the other hand, hang back, in doubt whether the crust may not break off and suddenly enlarge the hole. You are encouraged forwards, and at last, peering nervously down the hole, you see with keen and lively interest that the crust appeared to have about the thickness of your walking-stick, at which depth there is a lake of boiling mud. The grey mud stirs and seethes in the round vent-hole, rising and falling, while on its surface the gas collects slowly into a huge bubble, which forms and bursts and then collects again.

For my part I do not deny that the sight fascinated me, but it deprived me of all wish to tread further on that shaking crust, and I sped back as lightly as I might, wishing all the way for wings, to where there was at least sound, green earth for a footing, in place of pumice stone and hardened mud, which some day, surely, will fly into splinters, and leave the seething, steaming lake once more open to the heavens.

From the hillside just beyond the gate of the Solfatara one gazes down on the town of Pozzuoli, brown and ancient, looking, I do not doubt, much the same unto this hour as when the Apostle Paul landed there from the *Castor and Pollux*, a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the Island of Melita. But if the town itself, the very houses clustered on the hill, preserve the aspect which they bore twenty centuries ago, so much cannot be said for the sea-front, which is vastly changed. Pozzuoli in those days must have rung with the noise of ships entering or departing.

Its quays were clamorous with all the speeches of the East; its great trade in corn needed long warehouses near the water's edge; its amphitheatre was built for the games of a people numbering many thousands. But now the little boats which come and go are too few to break the long silence of the city, and there are scarce any other noises in the place than the shout of children at their games, or the loud crack of the vetturino's whip as the strangers rattle through the streets on their way to Baiæ.

It was the fall of Capua which made the trade of Pozzuoli, and it was the rise of Ostia that destroyed it. Capua, long the first town of Italy by reason of its commerce and its luxury, lost that pre-eminence in the year 211 B.C., when the Romans avenged the adhesion of the city to the cause of Hannibal. That act of punishment made Rome the chief mart of merchants from the East, and the nearest port to the Eternal City being Pozzuoli, the trade flowed thither naturally. Naples no doubt had a finer harbour; but Naples was not in Roman hands, while Pozzuoli was. Ostia, before the days of the Emperor Claudius, who carried out great works there, was a port of smallest consequence. Thus the harbour of Pozzuoli was continually full of ships. They came from Spain, from Sardinia, from Elba, bringing iron, which was wrought into fine tools by cunning workmen of the town; from Africa, from Cyprus, and all the trading ports of Asia Minor and the isles of the Ægean. Thither came also the merchants of Phœnicia, bringing with them all those gorgeous wares which moved the prophet Ezekiel to utter so great a chant of glory and its doom. "Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead they traded in thy fairs. . . . These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in

blue clothes and broidered work and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords and made of cedar among thy merchandise. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market. Thou wast replenished and made very glorious in the midst of the seas." All that most noble description of the commerce of Tyre returns irresistibly upon the mind when one looks back on the greatness of Pozzuoli, where the Tyrians themselves had a mighty factory and all the nations of the East brought their wares for sale. Most of all the town rejoiced when the great fleet hove in sight which came each year from Egypt in the spring. Seneca has left us a description of the stir. The fleet of traders was preceded some way in advance by light, swift sailing ships which heralded its coming. They could be known a long way off, for they sailed through the narrow strait between Capri and the mainland with topsails flying, a privilege allowed to none but ships of Alexandria. Then all the town made ready to hasten to the water's edge, to watch the sailors dancing on the quays, or to gloat over the wonders which had travelled thither from Arabia, India, and perhaps even far Cathay.

Well, all this is an old story now—too old, perhaps, to be of any striking interest—yet here upon the shore is still the vast old Temple of Serapis, the Egyptian goddess whom the strangers worshipped. One knows not by what slow stages the Egyptians departed and the ancient temple was deserted. The only certain fact is that at some period the whole inclosure was buried deep beneath the sea, and after long centuries raised up again by some fresh movement of the swaying shore.

Strange as this seems to those who have not watched the perpetual heavings and subsidences of a volcanic land, the testimony of the fact is

unmistakably in sight of all. For the sacred inclosure once hallowed to the rite of Serapis is still not allotted to any other purpose; and the visitor who enters it finds many of the ancient columns still erect. It is a vast quadrangle, once paved with squares of marble. There was a covered peristyle, and in the centre another smaller temple. Many of the columns of fine marble which once adorned the abode of the goddess were reft from her in the last century, when the spot was cleared of all the soil and brushwood which had grown up about it; but three huge pillars of cipollino, once forming part of the pronaos, are still erect; and what is singular about them is that, beginning at a height of some twelve feet from the ground and extending some nine feet further up, the marble is honeycombed with holes, drilled in countless numbers deep into the round surface of the columns.

There is no animal in earth or air which will attack stone in this destructive manner; but in the sea there is a little bivalve, called by naturalists "lithodomus," whose only happiness lies in boring. This animal is still found plentifully in the Bay of Baiæ. His shells still lie in the perforations of the columns; and it is thus demonstrated that the ancient temple must have been plunged beneath the sea, that it lay there long ages, till at length some fresh convulsion reared it up once more out of the reach of fish. Surely few buildings have sustained so strange a fate!

The holes drilled by the patient lithodomus, as I have said, do not extend through the whole height of the column, but have a range of about nine feet only, which is thus the measure of the space left for the operations of the busy spoiler. Above the ring of perforations one sees the indications of

ordinary weathering, so that the upper edge of the holes doubtless marks the level of high water, and the summit of the columns stood up above the waves. But one does not see readily what protected the lower portion of the marble. Possibly, before the land swayed downwards something fell which covered them.

In the twelfth century the Solfatara broke forth into eruption for the last time. The scoriæ and stones fell thick in Pozzuoli, and they filled the court of the Serapeon to the height of some twelve feet. Probably the sea had then already stolen into the courtyard; and it may be that the earthquakes attending the eruption caused the subsidence which left the lithodomus free to crawl and bore upon the stones which saw the ancient mysteries of Serapis. At any rate it was another volcanic outburst which raised the dripping columns from the sea in 1538, since which time the land has been swaying slowly down once more, so that now if anyone cares to scratch the gravel in the courtyard he will find he has constructed a pool of clear sea water.

It is a strange and terrible thing to realise the existence of hidden forces which can sway the solid earth as lightly as a puff of wind disturbs an awning; none the less terrible because the ground has risen and fallen so very gently that the pillars stand erect upon their bases. Once more, as at the Solfatara, one has the sense of treading over some vast chasm filled with a sleeping power which may awake at any moment. Let us go on beyond the city and see what has happened elsewhere upon this bay, so beautiful and yet so deadly, a strange dwelling-place for men who have but one life to pass on the surface of this earth.

In passing out of Pozzuoli one sees upon the right

the vine-clad slopes of Monte Barbaro. That also is a crater, the loftiest in the Phlegræan fields, but long at rest. The peasants believe the mountain to contain vast treasures—statues of kings and queens, all cast of solid gold, with heaps of coin and jewels so immense that great ships would be needed to carry them away. These tales are very old. I sometimes wonder whether they may not have had their source in dim memory of the great hoard of treasure which the Goths stored in the citadel of Cumæ, and which, when their power was utterly broken, they were supposed to have surrendered to the imperial general Narses. Perhaps they did not; perhaps——but what is the use of suppositions? Petrarch heard the stories when he climbed Monte Barbaro in 1343. Many men, his guides told him, had set out to seek the treasure, but had not returned, lost in some horrible abyss in the heart of the mountain. They must have neglected the conditions of success. They should have watched the moon, and learnt how to catch and prison down the ghosts which guard the precious heaps, otherwise the whole mass, even if found, will turn to lumps of coal!

What a wilderness of craters! Small wonder if wild tales exist yet in a district which in old days, and even modern ones, has been encompassed with fear. One volcano is enough to fill the country east of Naples with terror. But here are many—active, doubtless, in very different ages—Monte Barbaro, Monte Cigliano, Monte Campana, Monte Grillo, which hems in the more recent crater of Avernus much as Somma encircles the eruptive crater of Vesuvius. What terrible sights must have been witnessed here in those far-distant days when these and other craters were in action!—"affliction such as

was not from the beginning of the creation which God created" until then! But a few miles away across the sea is Monte Epomeo, towering out of Ischia. That was the chief vent of the volcanic forces in Roman times; and then the Phlegræan fields were still. Epomeo has been silent for five centuries; but that proves nothing, and there are people who suggest that the awful earthquake which destroyed Casamicciola may be just such a prelude to the awakening of Epomeo as was the convulsion which shook Pompeii to its foundations sixteen years before its final destruction. *Dî avertite omen!*

We need not, however, go back five centuries for facts that bid men heed what may be passing underground about the shores of this blue bay. Here is one too large to be overlooked, immediately in front of us—no other than the green slope of Monte Nuovo, a hill of aspect both innocent and ancient, ridged with a few pine trees by whose aid the mountain contrives to look as if it had stood there beside the Lucrine Lake as long as any eminence in sight. This is a false pretension. There was no such mountain when Petrarch climbed the neighbouring height, nor for full two centuries afterwards. What Petrarch saw exists no longer. He looked down upon the Lucrine Lake connected with the sea by a deep channel, and formed with Lake Avernus into one wide inlet fit for shipping. This was the Portus Julius, a harbour so large that the whole Roman fleet could manœuvre in it. The canals and piers were in existence less than four centuries ago; and this great work, so remarkable a witness to the sea power of the Romans, would doubtless have lasted unto our day had it not been for the intrusion of Monte Nuovo, which destroyed

TRACES OF THE EARTHQUAKE AT CASAMICCIOLA

the channels and reduced the Lucrine Lake to the dimensions of a sedgy duck pond.

The catastrophe is worth describing, for no other in historic times has so greatly changed the aspect of this coast or robbed it of so large a portion of its beauty. For full two years there had been constant earthquakes throughout Campania. Some imprisoned force was heaving and struggling to release itself, and all men began to fear a great convulsion. On the 27th of September, 1538, the earth tremors seemed to concentrate themselves around the town of Pozzuoli. More than twenty shocks struck the town in rapid succession. By noon upon the 28th the sea was retreating visibly from the pleasant shore beside the Lucrine Lake, where stood the ruined villa of the Empress Agrippina, and a more modern villa of the Anjou kings, who were used, like all their predecessors in Campania, to take their ease in summer among the luxuriant vegetation of the hills whose volcanic forces were believed to be lulled in a perpetual sleep.

For three hundred yards the sea fell back, its bottom was exposed, and the peasants came with carts and carried off the fish left dry upon the strand. The whole of the flat ground between Lake Avernus and the sea had been heaved upwards; but at eight o'clock on the following morning it began to sink again, though not as yet with any violence. It fell apparently at one spot only, and to a depth of about thirteen feet, while from the hollow thus formed there burst out a stream of very cold water, which was investigated cautiously by several persons, some of whom found it by no means cold, but tepid and sulphurous. Ere long those who were examining the new spring perceived that the sunken ground was rising awfully. It was upreared so rapidly that by

noon the hollow had become a hill, and as the new slopes swelled and rose where never yet had there been a rising ground, the crest burst and fire broke out from the summit.

"About this time," says one Francesco del Nero, who dwelt at Pozzuoli, "about this time fire issued forth and formed the great gulf with such a force, noise, and shining light that I, who was standing in my garden, was seized with great terror. Forty minutes afterwards, though unwell, I got upon a neighbouring height, and by my troth it was a splendid fire, that threw up for a long time much earth and many stones. They fell back again all round the gulf, so that towards the sea they formed a heap in the shape of a crossbow, the bow being a mile and a half and the arrow two-thirds of a mile in dimensions. Towards Pozzuoli it has formed a hill nearly of the height of Monte Morello, and for a distance of seventy miles the earth and trees are covered with ashes. On my own estate I have neither a leaf on the trees nor a blade of grass. . . . The ashes that fell were soft, sulphurous, and heavy. They not only threw down the trees, but an immense number of birds, hares, and other animals were killed."

Amid such throes and pangs Monte Nuovo was born, and the events of that natal day suggest hesitation before we label any crater of the Phlegræan fields with the word "extinct." It is granted that in the course of geologic ages volcanic forces do expend themselves. The British Isles, for instance, contain many dead volcanoes, once at least as formidable as any in the world. But the exhaustion has been the work of countless ages, and many generations of mankind will come and go upon this planet before the coasts of Baiæ and Misenum are as safe as those of Cumberland.

While speaking of these terrors, I have been halting by the wayside at a point, not far beyond the outskirts of Pozzuoli, where two roads unite, the one going inland beneath the slope of Monte Barbaro, the other following the outline of the curved shore on which Baiæ stands. The inland road is the one which goes to Cumæ, and is entitled to respect, if not to veneration, as being among the oldest of Italian highways, the approach to the most ancient Greek settlement in Italy, mother city of Pozzuoli and of Naples, not to mention the mysterious Palæopolis, whose very existence has been disputed by some scholars. Some say it was more than ten centuries before Christ's birth that the bold Greeks of Eubœa came up this coast, where already their kinsmen were known as traders, and having settled first on Ischia moved to the opposite mainland, and built their acropolis upon a crag of trachyte which overhung the sea. Their life was a long warfare. More than once they owed salvation to the aid of their kinsmen from Sicilian cities, yet they made their foundation a mighty power in Italy. With one hand they held back the fierce Samnite mountaineers who coveted their wealth, and gave out with the other more and more freely that noble culture which has had no rival yet.

One must wonder why these strangers coming from the south passed by so many gulfs and harbours shaped out of the enduring rock only to choose a site for their new city at the foot of all these craters. It may be that chance had its part in the matter; in some slight indication of wind or wave they may have seen the guidance of a deity. Indeed, an ancient legend says their ships were guided by Apollo, who sent a dove flying over sea to lead them. But again, the fires of the district were sacred in their eyes. The

subterranean gods were near at hand, and on the dark shore of Lake Avernus they recognised the path by which Ulysses sought the shades. The mysteries of religion drew them there, and the cave of the Cumæan sibyl became the most venerated shrine in Italy. Lastly, one may perceive that the volcanic tract, full of terrors for the Etruscan or Samnite mountaineer who looked down upon its fires from afar, must have made attack difficult from the land.

Greek cities, such as Cumæ, studded the coast of southern Italy. "Magna Græcia" they called the country; and Greek it was, in blood, in art, and language. How powerful and how rich is better understood at Pæstum than it can be now at Cumæ, where, with the single exception of the Arco Felice, there remains no dignity of ruin, nothing but waste, crumbling fragments, half buried in the turf of vineyards. Such shattered scraps of masonry may aid a skilful archæologist to imagine what the city was; but in the path of untrained men they are nothing but a hindrance, and anyone who has already in his mind a picture of the greatness of Eubœan Cumæ had better leave it there without attempt to verify its accuracy on the spot.

Observations similar to these apply justly to most of the remaining sights in this much-vaunted district. The guides are perfectly untrustworthy. They give high-sounding names to every broken wall, and there is not a burrow in the ground which they cannot connect with some name that has rung round the world. It is absolutely futile to hope to recapture the magic with which Virgil clothed this country. The cave of the Sibyl under the Acropolis of Cumæ was destroyed by the imperial general Narses when he besieged the Goths. The dark, wet passage on the shore of Lake Avernus, to which the name of

LAKE AVERNUS

the Sibyl is given by the guides, is probably part of an old subterranean road, not devoid of interest, but is certainly not worth the discomfort of a visit. The Lake of Avernus has lost its terrors. It is no longer dark and menacing, and anyone may satisfy himself by a cursory inspection that birds by no means shun it now.

The truth is that this region compares ill in attractions with that upon the other side of Naples. In days not far distant, when brigands still invested all the roads and byways of the Sorrento peninsula, strangers found upon the Bay of Baiæ almost the only excursion which they could make in safety; and imbued as every traveller was with classical tradition, they still discovered on this shore that fabled beauty which it may once have possessed. There is now little to suggest the aspect of the coast when Roman fashion turned it into the most voluptuous abode of pleasure known in any age, and when the shore was fringed with marble palaces whose immense beauty is certainly not to be imagined by contemplating any one of the fragments that stud the hillside, though it may perhaps be realised in some dim way by anyone who will stand within the atrium of some great house at Pompeii, say the house of Pansa, who will note the splendour of the vista through the colonnaded peristyle, and will then remember that the Pompeiian houses were not famed for beauty, while the palaces of Baiæ were.

Baiæ, like Cumæ, is lost beyond recall. Fairyland is shattered into fragments; and the guides who baptise them with ridiculous names know no more than any one of us what it is they say. Really, since the tragedy of that first great outbreak of Vesuvius did, as Goethe said, create more pleasure for posterity than any other which has struck mankind, one is

disposed to wish that it had been more widespread. If only the ashes had rained down a trifle harder at Misenum and at Baiæ, what noble Roman buildings might have survived unto this day, conserved by the kind wisdom of the mountain! What matter if more of that generation had been left houseless? It nearly happened, if Pliny's letter is not exaggerated. "The ashes now began to fall on us," he says, of his escape with his mother from the palace at Misenum, "though in no great quantity. I turned my head, and observed behind us a thick smoke which came rolling after us like a torrent. We had scarce stepped out of the path when darkness overspread us, not like the darkness of a cloudy night, nor that when there is no moon, but that of a closed room when all the lights are out. Nothing was to be heard but the shrieks of women, the screams of children, and the cries of men, some calling for their children, others for their parents, others for their husbands, and only distinguishing each other by their voices. . . . At length a glimmering light appeared, which we imagined to be rather the forerunner of an approaching burst of flames, as in truth it was, than the return of day. However, the fire fell at some distance from us. Then again we were immersed in thick darkness, and a heavy shower of ashes rained upon us, which we were obliged every now and then to shake off, otherwise we should have been crushed and buried in the heap. . . ." It is an awful tale. Anyone can see how nearly all this region escaped the fate of Pompeii, and how narrowly the modern world lost a greater joy than that of contemplating the city by the Sarno.

However, it did not happen so, and there is comparatively little satisfaction in describing all the melancholy scraps of what was marvellously beautiful. I have nothing to say about them which

is not said as fully in the guide-books. There is, however, something which more piques my interest in the narrow tongue of land parting the Lucrine Lake from the sea. There is, or was, a causeway here so ancient that even the Greeks, who settled at Cumæ so many centuries before our era, did not know who built it; and being in the dark about the matter, put down the construction to no less a person than the god Hercules, who made it, they declared, for the passage of the oxen which he had taken from Geryon, the monster whom he slew in Gades. It was no small work, even for Hercules. The dam was eight stadia long, nearly a mile, made of large stone slabs laid with such skill that they withstood the sea for many centuries. Who could have been the builders of this dam in days so ancient that even the Greek settlers did not know its origin? Rome was not in those days. There were factories and traders on the coast, —Phœnicians perhaps. But why guess about a question so impossible to solve? The curiosity of the thing is worth noting; for the age of civilisation on these coasts is very great.

At this spot beside the Lucrine Lake, where the sea is lapping slowly, almost stealthily, on the one hand, and the diminished waters of the lake lie still and reedy on the other, one memory, more than any other, haunts my mind. It cannot have been far from this very spot, certainly in sight of it, that there stood in old Roman days the villa of the Empress Agrippina, mother of the Emperor Nero, and it was at Baiæ, lying just across the blue curved bay, that he planned her murder, as soon as he discovered that she loved power, like himself, and stood in the way of certain schemes on which he set great store.

The fleet which lay at Capo Miseno, the great naval station of those days, was commanded by one

Anicetus, a freedman, who, being of an ingenious mechanical turn of mind, devised a ship of a sort likely to prove useful to any tyrant anxious to speed his friends into the nether world without suspicion. It had much the same aspect as other ships when viewed from without; but a careful observer of its inward parts might notice that the usual tight boltings were replaced by movable ones, which could be shot back at will, so that on a given signal the whole ship would fall to pieces. This pretty toy was of course not designed to make long voyages—it was enough if it would reach deep water.

Nero was delighted. He saw now how to avoid all scandal. The Empress was at that moment on the sea, homeward bound from Antium, and designed to land at Bauli, which lay near Baiæ on the bay. The ship was prepared, the bolts were shot, and the pretty pinnace lay waiting on the beach at Bauli when the Empress disembarked. And there too was Nero, come from Baiæ on purpose to pay duty to his mother and invite her to spend the Feast of Minerva with him at Baiæ, whither he hoped she would cross over in the boat which he had had the pleasure of fitting up with the splendour which was proper to her rank.

Agrippina knew her son, and was suspicious. She would go to Baiæ, but preferred to follow the road in a litter. That night, however, when the festivities at Baiæ were over, her fears vanished. Nero had been affectionate and dutiful. He had assured her of his love. It would be churlish to refuse to enter the boat which he had fitted out for her, and which having been brought over from Bauli now lay waiting for her on the sands. It was a bright night, brilliant with stars. The bay must have looked incomparably peaceful and lovely. On the shore there were crowds

of bathers, all the fashionable world of Rome, drawn thither by the presence of the Emperor, and attracted out by the beauty of the night. At such a time and place nothing surely could be planned against her. She went on board with her attendants. The rowers put off from land. They had gone but a little way when the canopy under which Agrippina lay crashed down on her and killed one of her waiting women. A moment's examination showed that it had been weighted with pigs of lead. Almost at the same moment the murderers on board withdrew the bolts. The machinery, however, refused to act. The planks still held together; and the sailors despairing of their bloodmoney, rushed to the side of the ship and tried to capsize it. They succeeded so far as to throw the Empress and her attendants into the sea. Agrippina retained sufficient presence of mind to lie silent on the water, supporting herself as best she could, while the sailors thrashed the sea with oars, hoping thus to make an end of their victim, and one poor girl who thought to save herself by crying out that she was the Empress had her brains beaten out for her pains. At last the shore boats, whose owners could not know that they were interrupting the Emperor's dearest wish, arrived upon the scene, picked up the Empress, and carried her to her villa on this Lucrine lake.

It would have been wiser to flee to a greater distance, if indeed there was safety in any Roman territory for the mother of the Emperor when he desired to slay her. That night, as she lay bruised and weak, deserted by her attendants, a band of murderers rushed in, headed by Anicetus, who thus redeemed his credit with his master when his more ingenious scheme had failed. "Strike the womb that bore this monster!" cried the Empress, and so died.

"Then," says Merivale, from whose most vivid story this is but an outline, "began the torments which never ceased to gnaw the heart strings of the matricide. Agrippina's spectre flitted before him. . . . The trumpet heard at her midnight obsequies still blared with ghostly music from the hill of Misenum."

CHAPTER III

THE BEAUTIES AND TRADITIONS OF THE POSILIPO

WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON VIRGIL THE ENCHANTER

IT was setting towards evening when I turned my back on Baiæ and drove through Pozzuoli along the dusty road which runs beside the sea in the direction of Posilipo. All day I had seen the blunt headland of tufa lying like a cloud on the further side of the blue bay; and from hour to hour as I plodded through the blasted country, my thoughts turned pleasantly to the great rampart which stood solid when all the region further west was shaken like a cornfield by the wind, and beyond which lies the city, with its endless human tragedies and its fatal beauty unimpaired by the possession of many masters. "Bocca baciata non perde ventura . . .," the scandalous old proverb has a sweet application to the city, and the mouth which has been kissed by conquerors and tyrants is still as fresh and rosy as when first uplifted for the delight of man.

I think this angle of the bay more beautiful than Baiæ or Misenum. In Roman times the opposite shore may have excelled it; but one does not know the precise form of the ancient coastline. As I advanced towards the headland, leaving behind the bathing-place of Bagnoli, and passing out on the wide

green flats which at that point occupy the valley mouth, the lofty crag of Nisida began to detach itself from the mainland, and a channel of blue sea shining between the two glowed sweetly in the increasing warmth of evening light. The island is a crater, a finely broken mass of volcanic rock and verdure, flecked here with light and there with shadow. One side of the crater lacks half of its rim, so that there is a little port. Down by the edge of the many-coloured water is a pier, where half a dozen boats lie rocking; and from a similar landing-place upon the shingly beach of the mainland a fisherman is hailing some comrade on the island. The answering shout floats back faint and distant through the clear air, and a boat pushes off, sculled slowly by a man standing erect and facing towards the bow, in the ancient fashion of the Mediterranean. At this point I dismiss my carriage, for I have many things to think about, and do not want the company of the chattering, extortionate vetturino. Having seen him go off up the hill, cracking his whip like pistol shots, and urging on his eager pony in the full hope of a fare at the Punta di Posilipo, I stroll on up the long ascent towards the shoulder of the hill, stopping often to watch the gold light grow warmer on the sea, tinging the volcanic crags of Ischia, until my enjoyment of the view is broken by an uninvited companion, who thrusts himself upon me with a reminder that I have reached the opening of the Grotto of Sejanus.

I had forgotten all about the grotto, though indeed it was the point for which I should have made, and but for the interruption of the lively little Tuscan who acts as custodian, I might have walked by without going in. I accepted gratefully the voluble assurances that this is indeed the most wonderful

POZZUOLI AND ISLAND OF NISIDA

and authentic grotto on the Posilipo, far surpassing those twin tunnels through which one goes from Naples to Pozzuoli; and the guide, having caught up a torch of smouldering tow, and vented a few hearty curses on the Neapolitans, who lie, he says, without recollection of eternity, conducted me into a long passage of utter and palpable darkness.

"Nè femmena nè tela a lume di cannela," say the Neapolitans—You must not judge either a woman or a weft by candlelight. This is very true, and many a man has suffered from forgetting it. But when it is a case of grottoes, there is no choice; and accordingly I delivered myself over to the chatter of the Tuscan.

The lively little man was extolling the superior character of his own countrymen of Tuscany; and when his torch flickered out with no warning, leaving us in sudden blackness in the bowels of the earth, his indignation blazed out fiercely against the worthless knaves who sold such tow in Naples. I paid little heed to him, for the grandeur and the silence of the place appeal to the imagination. I was treading on a smooth and even floor, between walls of tufa which had been chiselled out so straight that whenever I looked back the entrance shone behind me like a star across a vast dark sky. The air was sweet and fresh, filtering through some hidden openings of the rock. The relighted torch flashed now on Roman brickwork, now on arches of massive stone built to increase the strength of the vault, and fit it the better for those great processions of chariots and horsemen which came and went to the villa at the further end, returning from a hunting party with dogs which had wearied out the game on the hills of Astroni, or escorting the gladiators landed at Pozzuoli for some combat in the theatre which now lies so waste and

desolate amid the vineyards. How this passage must have rung with shouts and laughter in old Roman days! But now it is as silent as the tomb; and one passes on a full half-mile in darkness, to emerge at length with heated fancy and high memories of Roman splendour, on nothing but a ruinous cottage, a starved vineyard, and a paltry garden-ground of common vegetables!

It is not possible, one thinks impatiently, that this trumpery of vines and cabbages can be all there is to see at the further end of a passage so ancient and hewn with such vast labour through the solid rock; and indeed, when one's eyes are used to the sunshine, one perceives that the garden plot lies like a dust heap on the ruins of a splendid palace. Treading across a patch of vegetables, covering I know not what remains of marble portico or colonnade, I peered down through the trails of budding vines into a hollow where some fragments of old masonry project still from the earth, and after much gazing perceived that the sides of the hollow rise in tiers, one bank above another, to the height of seventeen rows. So that here, on this now lonely creek of the Posilipo, in face of Nisida and all the blue reach of the Bay of Baiæ, there was once a theatre, ringing with shouts and applause, and by it all the other buildings of a noble mansion. It is a poor ruin now, stripped of the marbles which once made it splendid. There are vast structures on the slopes and in the sea itself: an Odeon, another building seated like a theatre, and relics innumerable of one of the greatest of all Roman villas, which must have been incomparably lovely. If only one such might have lasted to our day!

The long darkness of the grotto, the exit on the hillside, where the ancient splendour is so shattered,

combine to create a sense of mystery which one never loses on the Posilipo. The sea frets and chafes about the jagged reefs at the base of the headland, echoing and resounding in caves of vast antiquity, where broken marbles and defaced inscriptions give substance to the tales of treasure which the fishers say lies hidden in them to this hour. The dullest of mankind would be smitten with some touch of fancy on this spot, much more the quick-witted Neapolitans, whose rich imagination has run riot among the relics of a splendid past.

The impression of this lonely cliff is characteristic of all the headland. I send away my guide, who can do nothing more for me, and perch myself upon a scrap of ancient wall, whence I can look past the green island of Nisida, full in the warm light of the westering sun, over the wide bay to where the black peak of Ischia, towering into the clear sky, begins to shine as if some goddess had brushed it with liquid gold.

There is a cavern in the cliff at no great distance which the fishermen call "La Grotta dei Tuoni" (The Cave of Thunders); I scarcely know why, unless it be because the sea bellows so loudly when it is driven by the storm wind round the vaults and hollows of the rock. The cave is accessible only by boat; and, like many another cleft in the soft tufa of this headland, it is believed to hide immeasurable riches, left there since the days when every cliff bore its white Roman villa, and all the shady caverns were the cool arbours of their pleasure grounds. From the creek of Marechiano, which cleaves the Posilipo in half, up to the very spot on which I sit, there is no break in the succession of the ruins. Ancient cisterns lie upon the beaches, the green tide washes over shattered colonnades, the boatmen peering down

through the translucent water as they sink their nets see the light waver round the foundations of old palaces, and the seaweeds stir fantastically on the walls. It is little wonder if no one of them can rid himself of the belief in spirits wandering yet about the wreck of so much splendour, or shake off the fear

> "Lest the dead should, from their sleep
> Bursting o'er the starlit deep,
> Lead a rapid masque of death
> O'er the waters of his path."

As for this cave of the thunders, the story goes that one day certain Englishmen presented themselves before a boatman who was lounging on the quay of Santa Lucia at Naples and demanded whether he would take them on his skiff into the grotto.

Pepino had seen the cavern many times, and did not fear it. "Why not?" he said, and the bargain was struck. As they rowed across the crescent bay of the Chiaia, past the Palazzo di Donna Anna, and under the hillside where the whispering pines grow down the high cliff faces, and golden lemons glow in the shade of marble terraces, the Englishmen were very silent; and Pepino, who loved chatter, began to feel oppressed. He did not quite like the zeal with which they sat studying a huge volume; for he knew that great books were of more use to magicians than to honest people, who were quite content with little ones, or better still with none at all. So he looked askance at the English students as he guided his boat to the mouth of the grotto of the thunders, and ran in out of the sunshine to the cool green shades and wavering lights among which the old treasure of the Romans lies concealed.

The Englishmen rose up, and one of them, taking the book in both hands, began to read aloud. Who

can tell what were the words? They were strange and very potent; for as they rolled and echoed round the sea-cave it seemed as if the vaulted roof rose higher, and Pepino, glancing this way and that in terror, saw that the level of the water was sinking. Shelf by shelf the sea sank down the rock, leaving dripping walls of which no living man had ever seen the shape before; and Pepino, keeping the boat steady with his oars, shook with fear as he saw the top of a marble staircase rear itself erect and shiny out of the depths of the ocean. Still the English student rolled out the sonorous words, which rang triumphantly through the cave, and still the water sank stair by stair, till suddenly it paused—the reader's voice had stopped, and slowly, steadily the sea began to rise again.

The spell was broken. A page was missing from the book! The Englishman in despair clutched at the pages as if he would tear them piecemeal. Instantly the crash of thunder rang through the cave, the sea surged back to its old level, the marble staircase leading to the treasure was engulfed, and the boatman, screaming on the name of the Madonna, was whirled out of the cavern into the light of day again.

Close below me is a little reef or island of yellow pozzolano stone, jutting out from the Punta di Coroglio, which is the name of the most westerly cliff of the Posilipo, that through which the tunnel runs. Under the island there is a tiny creek with a beach of yellow sand; the spot is so silent that I can hear the ripple plashing on the beach. That rock is a famous one. It is the "Scoglio di Virgilio," the Rock of Virgil, by all tradition a favourite haunt of the great poet, and the spot in which he practised his enchantments.

Petrarch said he did not believe in those enchantments. But then King Robert questioned him about them at a moment when both were riding with a gallant party, and the joy of life was surging high enough to make men doubt all achievements but those of battle or of love. Had Petrarch sat alone watching the sunset bathe the Scoglio di Virgilio with gold, he might have judged the matter differently. At any rate twenty generations of Neapolitans since his day have accepted the beliefs of thirty more who went before them, and set down Virgil as a magician. Why must we be wiser than fifty generations of mankind?

To be a wizard is not to be wicked! Virgil's fair fame is in no danger. There was no malignity in any of the spells wrought out on that little headland. Each of them conferred a benefit on the city which the poet loved. One by one the woes of Naples were assuaged by the beneficent enchanter; its flies, its serpents, the fatal tendency of butcher's meat to go bad, exposure to volcanic fires, all were held in check by the power of the enchanter.

A stranger visiting Naples ten centuries ago would have found it studded with the ingenious inventions of the wizard. Perhaps the device for bridling the audacity of Vesuvius might be the first to strike him. It was nothing less than a horse of bronze bestridden by an archer, whose notched arrow was ever on the string, its point directed at the summit of the mountain. This menace sufficed to hold the unruly demons of the fire in check, and might do so to this hour were it not that one day a countryman coming into Naples from the Campagna, and looking at the statue for the hundredth time felt bored by seeing the archer had not fired off his arrow yet, and so did it for him. The shaft sped through the air, striking the rim of

the crater, which straightway boiled over and spouted fire, and from that day to this no man has found the means of placing another arrow on the string. It is a thousand pities. San Gennaro has taken up the duty now, and stands pointing imperiously with outstretched hand bidding the volcano halt. He had some success too. In 1707, when the fires of the volcano turned night into day, and its smoke converted day into night, San Gennaro was carried in procession as far as the Porta Capuana, and had no sooner come in sight of the mountain than the thunders ceased, the smoke was scattered, the stars appeared, and Naples was at peace. But as a rule the holiness of the saint impresses the demons less than the menace of the arrow, and the mountain goes on burning.

As for the bronze fly which the good poet made and set high on one of the city gates, where it banished every other insect from the town, it certainly is not in Naples now. Many people must have wished it were. The story runs that the young Marcellus was intercepted by Virgil one day as he was going fowling, and desired to decide whether he would rather have a bird which would catch all other birds, or a fly which would drive away all flies. Nobody who knows Naples can doubt the answer. Marcellus, it is true, thought fit to consult the Emperor Augustus before replying; but that fact only adds to the weight of his decision. He decided on the fly, and many a man listening in the midnight to the deadly humming outside his mosquito curtains will lament the loss of Virgil's fly.

It is an Englishman, one John of Salisbury, who collects these pretty tales for us; and he has another which, as it supplies a reason for an historical fact which must have puzzled many people in the history

of Naples, is the better worth recording, and may indeed have the luck to please both clever and stupid people in one moment.

The puzzling fact is to discover how on earth it happened that the city which in Middle Ages bore a somewhat evil reputation for surrendering itself light-heartedly at the first summons of any conqueror, yet held such a different repute in earlier days, having remained faithful to the Greek Empire in Constantinople when Amalfi had fallen and Salerno received a stranger garrison, which resisted heroically every attack of Lombard or of Norman, and saw army after army retire baffled from before its walls. Whither had all that stout-heartedness fled in the days when French, Spanish, and German conquerors found no more resistance in the Siren city than in a beautiful woman to whom one man's love is as much as any other's? How came that old glory to sink into shame, to accept slavery and to forget faith? The answer is that in the old days the city was kept by a spell of the enchanter Virgil.

Virgil, it seems, musing on this point of rock throughout long moonlight nights, had constructed a palladium. It consisted of a model of the city, inclosed in a glass bottle, and as long as this fragile article remained intact the hosts of besiegers encamped in vain beneath the walls. The Emperor Henry the Sixth was the first who managed to break in. The city fathers rushed to their palladium to discover why for the first time it had failed to protect them. The reason was but too plain. There was a small crack in the glass!

Through that crack all the virtue went out of the palladium, and until the great upstirring of heroic hearts which the world owes to France at the close of the eighteenth century, Naples was never credited

SCOGLIO DI VIRGILIO

again with any marked disposition to resist attack or to strike courageously for freedom. I am not sure whether those who know best the inner heart of Naples would claim that the great deeds wrought since then are to be attributed to any new palladium; but, for my part, if spells are to be spoken of, I prefer to hold that the long age of sloth and slavery is that which needs the explanation of black magic, and that neither the loyal Naples of old days nor the free Naples of the present time owes any debt to other sources than its own high spirit and its natural stout heart, which slept for centuries, but are now awake again.

The setting sun has dropped so far towards the sea that the tide begins to wash in grey and gold around the yellow cliffs. The bay is covered with dark shades falling from the sky in masses, and a little wind rising from the west ruffles the water constantly. Only the ridge of Ischia yet holds the light, and there it seems as if a river of soft gold flowed along the mountain-top, vivid and pure, turning all the peak of Epomeo to a liquid reflection, impalpable as the sky itself. But the glow fades even as I watch it; and the approach of chilly evening warns me not to loiter on the lonely hill-side. I wander down across the hollow, passing near the broken theatre, and so strike a path which climbs up the further hill between high walls and hedges, where it is already almost dark, bringing me out at length on the main road which crosses the headland, just where a row of booths is set to catch the soldi of those Neapolitans who have strayed out here in search of evening freshness. There is a clear, sharp air upon this high ground; and the young moon climbing up the sky sends a faint, silvery light upon the sea. The road winds on as beautifully as a man

need wish. On the left hand rises the hill, on the right the ground drops in sharp, swift slopes, cleft with deep ravines where the cliff is sometimes sheer and sometimes passable for men. All these hollows are filled with vegetation of surpassing beauty—here a belt of dark green pines, there a grove of oranges thatched over to protect them from the sun. Golden lemons gleam out of the rich foliage, hanging thick and numberless upon the trees. The bare stems of fig trees are bursting out into their first yellow leaf; and the hedges of red roses and abutilon fill every nook with masses of bright colour unknown except in lands where spring comes with gentle touch and warm, sweet days of sunny weather. Far down amid the depths of this luxuriance of fruit and flowers the sea washes round some creek or curved white beach, and there built out with terraces and balconies of pure white stone are villas which repeat the splendour of those Roman homes over whose ruins they are built and whose altars lie still in the innumerable caverns which pierce the base of the old legendary headland.

In the silvery dusk of this spring evening the beauty of these ravines brimming over with fruits and flowers is quite magical. I pause beside a low wall, over which a man may lean breast high, and gaze down through the shadows spreading fast among the trellised paths below. The fading light has robbed the lemons of their colour; but the crimson roses are flaming still against a heavy background of dark firs, and beyond them the path winds out upon a little beach, where the tide breaks at the foot of yellow cliffs, and a boat is rocking at her moorings. Beyond the outline of the wooded cliff the grey sea lies darkening like a steely mirror; and lifting my eyes I can see the spit of rock on which

stands the enchanted Castle of the Egg, black and grim as ever, and higher still Vesuvius towering amid the pale sky and the stars, its slowly coiling pillar of dark smoke suffused with a rosy glow, the reflection of the raging furnace hidden in its cone. Already one or two lamps are flashing on the shore. The day is nearly gone, and the beautiful Southern night is come.

Many people had wandered up from Naples to enjoy the taste of approaching summer on this height, where surely the scent of roses is more poignant than elsewhere and the outlook over land and sea is of incomparable beauty. As I walked on slowly down the road my ears caught the tremulous shrill melody of a mandolin, and a man's voice near at hand trolled forth the pretty air of "La vera sorrentina." I stopped to listen. The voice was sweet enough, and some passion was in the singer.

"Ma la sgrata sorrentina
Non ha maje di me pietà!"

The music came from a little roadside restaurant, half open to the sky, where a few people sat at tables overlooking the sea. I strolled in, and sat sipping my vino di Posilipo while the mandolin thrummed till the singer grew tired, took his fees, and went off to some other café. The wine is not what it was in Capaccio's days. "Semper Pausilypi vigeat poculum!" cries the jolly topographer, "and may Jupiter himself lead the toasts!" By all means, if he will; but I fear the son of Saturn will not be tempted from Olympus by the contents of the purple beaker set before me at the price of three soldi. "It is pure, it is fragrant, it is delicious," Capaccio goes on, waxing more eloquent with every glass. "In the fiercest heat it is grateful to the stomach, it goeth down easily, it

promoteth moisture, it molesteth neither the liver nor the reins, nor doth it even obfuscate the head! Its virtue is not of those that pass away; for whether of this year, last year, or of God knows when, it hath still the scent of flowers, and lyeth sweetly on the tongue." I think Capaccio must have had a vineyard here, and sold his wines by auction. Far beneath me I could hear the washing of the sea, and the moon climbing up the sky scattered a gleam of silver here and there upon the water. Naples stretched darkly round the curving shore, while high upon the ridge the Castle of St. Elmo stood out black and solid against the night sky, with the low priory in front, sword and cowl dominating the city, as ever through her history, whether for good or ill.

In dusk or sunshine no man who looks upon this view will need to ask why Virgil loved it, and desired to be buried near the spot whence he had been used to watch it. Not far away upon my left, above the grotto which leads to Pozzuoli, is the tomb traditionally known as his. There are many who believe and some who doubt; but there is a mediæval tale about the matter which is well worth telling. It was commonly reported in the days of Hohenstaufen and Anjou that the bones of Virgil were buried in a castle surrounded by the sea. There is no other fortress to which this could apply than the Castle of the Egg.

In the reign of Roger, King of Sicily, a certain scholar—they are always English, in these legends!—who had wandered far in quest of learning, came into the royal presence with a petition. The King, who found him wise and grave, and took pleasure in his conversation, was willing to grant his wish, whatever it might be; whereon the Englishman replied that he would not abuse the royal favour, nor beg for any

mere ephemeral pleasure, but would ask a thing which in the eyes of men must seem but small, namely, that he might have the bones of Virgil, wheresoever he might find them in the realm of Sicily. It was even then long since forgotten in what spot precisely the body of the great poet had been laid; and it seemed to the King little likely that a stranger from the north should be able to discover what had remained hidden from the Neapolitans. So he gave consent, and the Englishman set forth for Naples, armed with letters to the Duke, giving him full power to search wherever he would. The citizens themselves had no fear of his success in a quest where they had often failed, and so made no effort to restrain him. The scholar searched and dug, guiding his operations by the power of magic. At last he broke into the centre of a mountain, where not one cleft betrayed the existence of any cavity or tomb. There lay the body of the mighty poet, unchanged and calm as if he slept. Full eleven centuries he had lain silently in a rest unbroken by the long-resounding tread of barbarous armies from the north, flooding and desolating the fair empire which must have seemed to him likely to outlast the world. I wish that some one of those who broke into the sepulchre, and shed the light of day once more upon those features which had slept so long in darkness, had told us with what feelings he looked upon them and saw the very lips that had spoken to Augustus, and the cheek which Horace kissed. I think the men who found themselves in the sudden presence of so much greatness must have stood there with a certain tremor, as those others did who not long afterwards disturbed the bones of Arthur and of Guenevere at Glastonbury, daring to lift and touch the long fair tresses which brought Lancelot to shame.

These men who found the tomb of Virgil would have done well if they had sealed it up again and lost the secret, so that the bones might lie unto this hour on the spot where the spirit is so well remembered. But the English scholar had the King's warrant, and claimed at least the books on which the wizard's head was propped. Those the Duke of Naples gave him, but the bones he refused, and had them taken for greater safety to Castel dell' Uovo, where they lay behind an iron grating and were shown to anyone who desired to see them. But if they were at any time disturbed, the air would darken suddenly, high gusts of storm would roar around the battlements of the castle, and the sea beating heavily about the rocks would rage as if demanding vengeance for the insult.

Such is the tale told by Gervasius of Tilbury, who has been dead almost half as long as Virgil. It may be true or untrue. I am not fond of climbing up into the judgment seat, or attempting to recognise white-robed truth in the midst of the throng of less worthy, though more amusing, characters which throng Italian legend. Least of all on such a night as this, when the soft wind blowing over the sea from the enchanted Castle of the Egg fills the air with whispering suggestions of old dead things and calls back many a tale of inimitable tragedy wrought out upon the shore of the gulf which lies before me—a furnace in all ages of hot passions and sensuous delights such as leave deep marks upon the memory of man. That most wilful quality is not unlike the echo in the hollow of some overhanging rock. It will repeat the sounds that please it, but no others, while even those it will distort, adding something wild or unearthly to every one, however ordinary. So the memory of the people selects capriciously those circumstances which it

PALACE OF DONNA ANNA, POSILIPO

cherishes; and even while it hands them on from generation to generation it is ever adding fact to fact with the cunning of him who writes a fairy tale, casting glamour round the sordid details, struggling towards the beautiful or terrible—even not seldom towards the scandalous.

A little lower on the slope of the hill, well in sight from the point at which I sit, there is a vast and ruined building on the very margin of the sea. In the dusk light I can clearly see its two huge wings thrust out into the water, and the broken outline of its roof breaking the pale sky. The tide washes round its foundations. The whole mass lies black and silent, except at one point where a restaurant has intruded itself into the shell of a once splendid hall, and lights flicker round the empty windows which were built for the pleasure of a court. Three hundred years ago this palace was begun for the wife of a Spanish viceroy, Donna Anna Carafa. It was never finished, and has been put to a number of degrading uses, being at one time a quarantine station, at another a stable for the horses of the tramway, while a few fishermen have always housed their wives and children in its old ruined chambers, undeterred by the tales which associate the ruin with the spirit of the Queen Giovanna.

Queen Giovanna is so great a personage in Naples that it is worth while to consider her particularly. There are few spots within thirty miles of Naples where one does not hear of her too amorous life and her tragic death. I doubt if there are half a dozen guides or vetturini in all the city who, if asked the name of this great building, will not answer that it is "Il Palazzo della Regina Giovanna," and on being further questioned will not tell a doleful story of how she was strangled in one of the deserted chambers.

The stranger, ignorant of Naples, will perhaps set down this fact, pleased to discover a trace of history yet lingering in the recollection of the people, and will cherish it carefully until he is told the same tale at Castel Capuano, on the other side of the city, with the addition of certain particulars which, by our narrow northern way of thinking, are damaging to Queen Giovanna's character. For instance, it is said of her that she was in those early days so convinced a democrat as to choose her lovers freely from among the sovereign people. They were doubtless gratified by her choice; but the pleasure faded when they discovered in due course of time that each favourite in turn, after the fickle Queen grew tired of him, was expected or compelled to leap from the top of a high tower, thus carrying all his knowledge of the secret scandals of a court by a short cut into the next world. A cruel Queen, it is true; but how prudent! Any one of us might leave a marvellous sweet memory of himself in the world, if only he could stop the mouths of—— But that has nothing to do with Queen Giovanna.

This sweet memory, however, this fruit of prudence, is precisely what the Queen has attained in Naples and in all the surrounding country. I have questioned many peasants who spoke to me about her, and received the invariable answer that she was a good Queen, a very good Queen—in fact, of the best. Now history, listening to this declaration, sighs and shakes her head despairingly. There were two queens named Giovanna—leaving out several others who, for various reasons, do not come into the reckoning. The first was certainly a better woman than the second, but she is credibly believed to have begun her reign when quite a girl by murdering her first husband, after which she departed in

various ways from the ideal of Sunday-schools. The second was an atrocious woman, concerning whose ways of life it is better to say as little as possible. The first was strangled, though not in Naples, or its neighbourhood, but at the Castle of Muro, far down in Apulia. The second had innumerable lovers, and was, perhaps, one of the worst women ever born.

The Queen Giovanna of tradition seems to be a blend of these two sovereigns, laden with the infirmities of both, and loved the more for the burden of the scandals which she bears. It is a charming trait, this disposition of poor humanity to glorify dead sinners! Conscious of their own imperfections, mindful of the condescension of a queen who steps down to the moral level of her people, the Neapolitans welcome her with outstretched hands, and love her for her peccadilloes. Legend confers a pleasanter immortality than history, earned less painfully, bestowed more charitably, and quite as durable.

CHAPTER IV

THE RIVIERA DI CHIAIA

AND SOME STRANGE THINGS WHICH OCCURRED THERE

IN bright sunshine I came down the last slopes of the Posilipo, wending towards the Riviera di Chiaia. The bay sparkled with innumerable colours; the hills lay in morning shadow; Vesuvius was dark and sullen, and the twin peaks of Capri rested on the horizon like the softest cloud. The sun fell very sweetly among the oranges in the villa gardens, lighting up their dark and glossy leaves with quick-changing gleams which moved and went as lightly as if reflected from the restless waters of the bay. Out on the sea there was a swarm of fishing boats, each provided with a rod of monstrous length; while as I reached the level of the sea, and entered on the winding road that goes to Naples, I found myself skirting a long, narrow beach, of which the reeking odours proclaimed it to be a landing-place of fishers. There, under the shadow of the towering cliff, boats were hauled up, nets were drying, fish frails were piled in heaps, and close to a small stone pier which jutted out into the water a couple of fishing-wives were scolding each other much in the same way as two dames of Brixham or of Newlyn, while a small urchin prone upon the sand, watched the encounter of wits with

eager curiosity to know whether more was to come of it or not.

More did not come of it. The strife sank into silence, and as I paced along the margin of the little beach, glancing now at the wide curve of the bay, now at the dark fortress of the enchanted Castle of the Egg upon its further horn, I found myself in a strange medley of ancient thoughts and modern ones, the old world wrestling with the new, tales of the kings of Aragon mingling with the cries of cabmen and the whirring noises of the tramways.

This little beach by which I stand is all that is now left of the Marina di Chiaia, which once ran round the bay up to the rocks and caverns of the Chiatamone, where the Egg Castle juts out into the sea. It was all a sandy foreshore, with boats hauled up and nets set out to dry, just as one may see them on this scrap which still remains. It was renowned as a place of ineffable odours. Indeed, an ancient writer, seeking a simile for a certain very evil smell, could think of none more striking than "that which one smells on the Marina di Chiaia in the evening." It is to be gathered that the women were in large measure responsible for this—as for most other things that go wrong in Naples. "Tutt' e' peccate murtali so' femmene," says the proverb—All the mortal sins are feminine; and if those, why not the smells also? But it is not to be supposed that the women of the Chiaia were the less attractive. Far from that. We have the word of the poet del Tufo that they were so gracious and charming that even a dead man would not remain insensible to the desire of loving them. What can have become of these houris? I did much desire to see them, but I searched in vain. I found none but heavy, wide-mouthed women, owning no charm but dirt, and no attractions save

a raucous tongue. Perhaps the disappearance of the smells involved the loss of the beauty also. If so, another grudge is to be cherished against the sanitary reformers, who so often in the history of mankind have proved that they know not what they do.

But I was about to speak of King Alfonso of Aragon, a monarch whose story can be forgotten by no one who has given himself the pleasure of reading the superb work in which Guicciardini has told the story of his times, a tale of greatness and of woe immeasurable, having in itself every element of tragedy, with a human interest which throbs even painfully from page to page. Macaulay, by giving currency to a stupid tale about a galley slave who chose the hulks rather than the history, has contrived to rob many of us of a pleasure far greater than can be derived from the antitheses in which he himself delights; and has spread abroad the impression that this prince among historians, this dignified and simple writer, this unsurpassed judge of men whom he himself in a wiser moment compared to Tacitus, was dull! It is but one more injustice done by Macaulay's hasty fancy, serving well to prove what mischief may be wrought by a man who cannot deny himself the pleasure of a quirk until he has reflected what injury it may do to another's reputation.

Alfonso of Aragon was King of Naples when the French, led by their King Charles the Eighth, were advancing through Italy to the attack of Naples. The old title of the House of Anjou which reigned in Naples for near two centuries, was in the French judgment not extinct; and Charles, called into Italy by Ludovic the Moor, Duke of Milan, and one of the greatest scoundrels of all ages, was pressing on through the peninsula faster and with more success

than either his friends wished or his enemies had feared. One by one the obstacles which were to have detained him in northern Italy crumbled at his approach. Florence was betrayed by Piero di Medici; the Neapolitan armies in the Romagna were driven back; the winter was mild, offering no obstacle to campaigning; the Pope was overawed; and at length Alfonso, seeing the enemy victorious everywhere, and now almost at his gates, fell into a strange state of nerves. The first warrior of his age broke down like a panic-stricken girl. The strong, proud King fell a prey to fear. He could not sleep, for the night was full of haunting terrors, and out of the dark there came to visit him the spectres of men whom he had slain by treachery, each one seeming to rejoice at the vengeance of which Heaven had made the French King the instrument.

Yet Alfonso had large and well-trained armies at his command, and the passes of the kingdom were easily defended. The French were no nearer than at Rome; and anyone who has travelled between the Eternal City and Naples must see how easily even in our own days a hostile army could be held among the mountains. Had there been a resolute defence, many a month might yet have passed before a single Frenchman reached the Siren city. But Alfonso could give no orders; and his terrors were completed by a vision which appeared to one of his courtiers in a dream repeated on three successive nights. It was the spirit of the old King Ferdinand which appeared to the affrighted Jacopo, grave and dignified as when all trembled before him in his life, and commanded, first in gentle words and afterwards with terrifying threats, that he should go forthwith to King Alfonso, telling him that it was vain to hope

to stem the French invasion; that fate had declared their house was to be troubled with infinite calamities, and at length to be stamped out in punishment for the many deeds of enormous cruelty which the two had committed, but above all for that one wrought, at the persuasion of Alfonso, in the Church of San Lionardo in the Chiaia when he was returning home from Pozzuoli.

The spirit gave no details of this crime. There was no need. The mere reference to it completed Alfonso's overthrow. Whatever the secret may have been, it scored the King's heart with recollections which he could not face when conjured up in this strange and awful manner. There was no longer any resource for him. His life was broken once for all, and hastily abdicating his kingdom in favour of his son Ferdinand, whose clean youth was unstained by any crimes, he carried his remorse and all his sinful memories to a monastery in Sicily, where he died, perhaps in peace.

No man who reads this tale can refrain from wondering where was this Church of San Lionardo on the Chiaia, and what it was that King Alfonso did there. The first question is easier than the last to answer, yet there are some materials for satisfying curiosity in regard to both.

It is useless to seek for the Church of San Lionardo now. It was swept away when the fine roadway was made which skirts the whole sea-front from the Piazza di Vittoria to the Torretta. But in old days it must have been a rarely picturesque addition to the beauty of the bay. It stood upon a little island rock, jutting out into the sea about the middle of the curve, near the spot where the aquarium now stands. It was connected with the land by a low causeway, not unlike that by which the

Castle of the Egg is now approached; and it was a place of peculiar interest and sanctity, apart from its conspicuous and beautiful position, because from the days of its first foundation it had claimed a special power of protection over those who were tormented by the fear of shipwreck or captivity, both common cases in the lives of the dwellers on a shore haunted by pirates and often vexed by storms. The foundation was due to the piety of a Castilian gentleman, Lionardo d'Oria, who, being in peril of wreck so long ago as the year 1028, vowed a church in honour of his patron saint upon the spot, wherever it might be, at which he came safely to land. The waves drove him ashore upon this beach, midway between Virgil's Tomb and the enchanted Castle of the Egg; and here his church stood for seven hundred years and more upon its rocky islet—a refuge and a shrine for all such as went in peril by land or sea.

Naturally enough, the thoughts of Neapolitans turned easily in days of trouble to the saint whose special care it was to extricate them. Many a fugitive slipped out of Naples in the dark and sped furtively along the sandy beach to the island church, whence, as he knew perfectly, he could embark on board a fishing-boat with far better hope of getting clear away than if he attempted to escape from Naples. Thus at all moments of disturbance in the city the chance was good that important persons were in hiding in the Church of San Lionardo waiting the favourable moment of escape. King Alfonso must have known this perfectly. One may even surmise that his journey to Pozzuoli was undertaken with the object of tempting out rebellious barons and their followers from the city, where they might be difficult to find, into this solitary spot,

where he could scarcely miss them. If so, he doubtless gloated over the first sight of the island church as he came riding down from the Posilipo and out upon the beach towards it, knowing that the trap was closed and the game his own.

Alfonso was a man who never knew mercy. Who the fugitives were whom he found hidden in the church, or in what manner they met their death, is, so far as I know, recorded nowhere. But this we know, that it was no ordinary death, no mere strangling or beheading of rebellious subjects that the King sanctioned and perhaps watched in this lonely church which was built as a refuge for troubled men. Of such deeds there were so many scored up to the account of both kings that the spirit of the elder could hardly have reproached his son with any one of them. What was done in the Church of San Lionardo was something passing the common cruelty of even Spaniards in those ages, and it is perhaps a merciful thing that oblivion has descended on the details.

I shall return again to King Alfonso and his family, for the city is full of memories of them, and in the vaults of the Castel Nuovo there are things once animate which throw a terrible light upon the practices of the House of Aragon. But for the time this may be enough of horrors; and I turn with pleasure to the long sea-front against which the tide is breaking fresh and pleasantly, surging white and foaming over the black rocks which skirt the foot of the sea-wall. The wind comes freshly out of the east. Capri is growing into a wonderful clearness. Even the little town upon the saddle of the island begins to glow white and sparkling, and the limestone precipices show their clefts and shadows in the increasing light. The soft wind blows in little sunny gusts,

TOWN OF CAPRI FROM CASTIGLIONE

which shake the blossoms of wistaria on the house-fronts, mingling the salt and fishy odours of the beach with the scent of flowers in the villa gardens. There is scarce a sign of cloud in the warm sky, and all the crescent bay between me and the city takes colours which are perpetually changing into deeper tints of liquid blue and rare soft green, with flashes here and there of brown, and exquisite reflections which are but half seen before they yield to others no less beautiful. The long white sea-wall gleams like the setting of a gem, and the warm air trembles slightly in the distance, so that the Castle of the Egg looks as if it were indeed enchanted, and might be near the doom predicted for it when its frail foundations shall be broken.

I had meant to spend an hour this morning in the Church of Sannazzaro, on the slope of the hill, at no great distance from this spot. He who does not see churches betimes in Naples may chance to miss them altogether, and will waste much temper during the hot afternoon in hammering on barred doors with vain effort to rouse sleepy sacristans. Heaven knows I am not indifferent to church architecture, and had the morning been less beautiful I should certainly have described learnedly enough, the building preserving the memory of the quaint and artificial poet whom Bembo, as frigid and unnatural as himself, declared to be next to Virgil in fame, as he was also next in sepulture. I often wonder whether Bembo really meant anything at all by this judgment, except an elegant turn of verse. If he did—— But I am straying away from the lights and shadows of this magic morning, which are far more delightful than the arcadian rhapsodies of Sannazzaro and of Bembo. Let me put them both aside. Or stay, one observation of the former comes into mind. He said the

Mergellina was "Un pezzo di cielo caduto in terra" —a scrap of heaven fallen down on earth. He had blood in him, then, this worshipper of nymphs and classicism; let us go and see his Mergellina. It will not take us far from the sea-front, to which it once lay open, in the days when there were no grand hotels nor ugly boarding-houses blocking out the sweet colours and the clean air of the sea.

As I turn inland, my eye is caught by a tablet on a house-front to the left, which has a melancholy interest for all Englishmen:—

"IN QUESTA CASA NACQUE FRANCESCO CARACCIOLI
AMMIRAGLIO
IL 18 GUIGNO 1752
STRANGOLATO AL 29 GUIGNO 1799"

"Strangolato"—ay, hung at Nelson's yardarm, while his flagship lay off Naples, and sunk afterwards in the sea, whence his naked body was washed up on shore. It is a foul story; a black stain on the memory of a hero whose achievements were too great for any man to attempt a judgment, or to strike a balance between his virtues and his sins. I turn my back upon the tablet, and wish that I could forget it.

In a few yards further the whole charming length of Sannazzaro's bit of heaven lies spread out before me. A wide, straight street, a paradise of yellow stucco, stained and peeling off, a wilderness of sordid shops and dirty children running wild, a solitary tramcar spinning on its way to Naples, a creaking cart with vegetables, a huckster bawling fish—I have not patience to catalogue the delights of the Mergellina of to-day, but turn my back on them and flee to the sea-front again, where I can look out on what is still unspoiled, because man has no dominion over it.

A short stroll towards the city within reach of the lapping waves restored my temper, and I remembered that as I fled from the Mergellina I saw over my shoulder a halting-place for tramcars, well known to all who visit Naples by the name of the "Torretta."

I hardly know how many of those visitors have asked themselves what this Torretta was, to which they have so often paid their fares of twenty-five centimes, or have connected it in memory with the other towers of which they hear upon the further side of Naples. But since Naples is a seaborn city, and a wealthy city by the shore of ocean attracts pirates as naturally as flies flock to honey, it may be as well to explain why the Torretta was built.

The tale goes back as far as the days of Don Fernando Afan de Rivera, Duca d'Alcala, who did Naples the honour of condescending to govern it as Viceroy to His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain from the year 1629 to 1631. He was an old and gouty viceroy, but not lacking in energy or courage. Those were times in which infinite numbers of Turkish pirates hovered round the coasts of Italy; and week by week the warning cannon roared out from Ischia, and the heavy toll of the alarm bells rolled along the shore from Campanella and Castellammare to the harbours beneath Vesuvius, waking all the fishermen to watchfulness and rousing the guards within the city walls.

"All' arme! all' arme! la Campana sona,
Li Turche so' arrivati a la marina!"

The terror-stricken refrain is still on the lips of the peasants in the coasts which were harried by Dragut and Ucchiali.

One night a band of these bold corsairs struck

suddenly in the darkness, and landed on the western end of the Chiaia, well outside the limits of the city. There were among their numbers certain renegades of Naples, and using the local knowledge of these scoundrels, they had conceived the design of capturing the Marchesa del Vasto, whose palace stood in this somewhat unprotected region, and whom they intended to surprise in her sleep. So rich a prisoner would have brought them a vast ransom ; but the scheme turned out disappointing. The Marchesa had gone to take the waters, over the hills at Agnano, whither greedy Turks could not pursue her. Nothing remained but to bag as many people of inferior consequence as time permitted ; and the renegades, turning to their advantage the alarm which was already spreading among the inhabitants, rushed about knocking at every door and imploring the people in anguished tones to come out at once and save themselves from the Turks, who were landing at that moment. Some poor frightened souls were simple enough to accept this invitation, and were made prisoners for their pains the moment they crossed the threshold. Others, more wisely, suspecting the trick, made rude replies, and barred their doors and shutters, knowing that at dawn, if not before, help must surely come from the neighbouring city.

They were not mistaken in their faith. Naples was astir, and the guards were mustering by torchlight in the streets. The Duca d'Alcala was at the Palazzo Stigliano, near the Porta di Chiaia. Old and gouty as he was, he had set himself at the head of his men, the city gate was flung open, and in the grey light of morning the Turks saw a considerable force advancing on them. They did not stay to fight, but pushed off their ships, carrying with them

twenty-four prisoners, whom next day they signified that they were willing to ransom. Accordingly parleys were held upon the Island of Nisida; the Viceroy himself paid part of the sum demanded, while the rest was contributed by the Society for the Redemption of Captives, a useful public institution whose income was heavily drawn upon in those days. Probably neither one nor the other was entirely pleased at having to pay out a large sum for the redemption of people living almost under the walls of the city. It was to guard against such mishaps in future that the Torretta was built, and garrisoned as strongly as its size permitted.

What old tales these seem, and how changed is all the aspect of this bay! San Lionardo gone as completely as the shadow of a drifting cloud! The Torretta degraded to a halting-place of tramcars! The Mergellina stripped of all that made the poet Sannazzaro love it! Only on the sea-front the same beauty of heavenly blue still shimmers on the waters, breaking into bubbles of pure gold where the soft tide washes up amid the rocks. The fishing boats slip to and fro under their large three-cornered sails. There is more wind out there upon the bay; it strikes in sharp puffs on the bellying canvas, and the light craft heel towards the land. One of them has put in beside the stairs not far from where I am loitering. The bottom of his boat is alive with silvery fish; and on the cool stones of the landing-place, just awash with clear green water, stand the barelegged fishermen, stooping over the still living fish, cleansing their burnished scales from the soil of the dirty skiff, laughing and chattering like children, as they are. Suddenly one of them snatches at a little object which the others had not noticed, and holds it up to me in gleeful expectation of a few

soldi. "Cavallo di mare!" A tiny sea-horse, already stiff and rigid, a clammy and uncomfortable curiosity. My good man, if I desire to look at sea-horses I have but to cross the road to the aquarium, where I can watch them in the grace and wonder of their life and shall not be asked to cumber myself with their dead bodies. Salvatore shrugs his shoulders. If I am mad enough to miss this chance, it is my own affair; the Madonna will scarce send me another. In the midst of the diatribe I stroll across to the aquarium.

Rarely, if ever, have I passed by this storehouse of great marvels without regretting it, for indeed it has no equal in the world. Tanks of fish are kept in many cities; the only aquarium is at Naples. There alone can one stand and watch the actual stress and movement of the life which passes in the sea, that animal life of myriad shapes and colours which is so like the plants and which while rooted to a rock, and spreading long translucent tendrils like a frond of seaweed, will yet curl and uncurl, swaying this way and that in search of food, or in the effort to escape some enemy it fears. For the depths of the sea are full of enemies, and every sense of those which dwell beneath it is alert. There one may see the tube-dwelling worms, thrust out from the mouth of their tall cylinders like a feathery tuft of tendrils, a revolving fan, which spins and spins until some sea-horse floating up erect and graceful comes too close, and instantly the fan closes, the tendrils disappear and lie hidden till the danger has gone by. Far along the rock clefts, high and low throughout the pools, there is a perpetual watchfulness and motion, a constant stir and trembling; and the provision which the lowest animal possesses for the protection of its life is in quick and momentary

use, laying open such a revelation of the infinite resources of nature as itself makes this cool chamber one of the most interesting places in the world.

But if a man go there for beauty only, in what profusion he will find it! The green depths of the tanks are all aglow with soft rich colour. The sea beneath the cliffs at Vico is not more blue on the softest day in spring than the fish which glide by among these shadows; nor are the lights seen from Castellammare when the sun drops down behind Ischia and the rosy flushes spread along the coast, more exquisite than the soft pink scales which glance through the arches of the rocks. Turquoise and pearl, emerald and jacinth, the gleams caught from the hidden sun above reflect the hues of every gem. The strange, dense vegetation, the quick flash of moving gold and purple, reveal a world of marvellous rich beauty; and if it be indeed the case that those bold divers of past days who dared to plunge out of the bright sun into the dusk and dimness of the ocean depths saw there the orange sponges, the waving forests of crimson weed, and all the myriad colours of the moving fishes glinting through them, it is no wonder that they came back into the world of men spreading tales of countless jewels, and unnumbered treasures, which lie buried in the caves and grottoes of the sea.

Naples is alive with stories of this sort; and not Naples only, but all Sicily and southern Italy share the tales of the great diver, Nicolò Pesce, who is sometimes a Sicilian and sometimes a dweller on the mainland, but is claimed by Naples with good reason, as I shall show presently. The mere sight of things so like those which Nicolò must have seen calls up all the rare stories told of him; and I go up into the Villa Garden, which skirts the long sea-front, and

having found a seat beneath a shady palm tree, whence I can watch the blue sea lying motionless around the dark battlements of Castel dell' Uovo, while the wind makes light noises in the feathery boughs above me, I fall to thinking of the diver who, at the bidding of the king, searched the caverns underneath the castle, which no man has ever found but he, and came back with his arms full of jewels. Any child in Naples knows that heaps of gems are lying in those caverns still.

Who was Nicolò Pesce? Ah! what is the use of asking such questions about a myth? He was once, like all of us, a thing which crept about the earth—it matters little when, *nei tempi antichi!* But now he is a butterfly fluttering in the world of romance, a theme for poets, and cherished in the heart of children. If you must know more about his actual existence, catch a child and give him a few soldi to escort you to the foot of the Vico Mezzocannone, away on the further side of the city, where the lanes drop steeply to the harbour. There, built into the front of a house, you will see an ancient stone, on which is carved the figure of a shaggy man grasping a knife in his right hand, while his left is clenched in the air. That is Nicolò Pesce, so called because he was at home in the water as a fish is; and the knife is that which he used to cut himself out from the bellies of the fish when he had done the long swift journeys which he was wont to make in the manner of which no other man had experience but Jonah.

You may get much more than this from the child, though confidence is hard to gain, and soldi will not always buy it. One day the King bade Nicolò find out what the bottom of the sea is like. The diver plunged, and when he came up gasping he said he had seen gardens of coral and large spaces of ribbed

sand strewn with precious stones, and piled here and there with heaps of treasure, mouldering weapons, the ribs of sunken ships and the whitening skeletons of drowned mariners. I well believe it! Ave Maria, Stella Maris, Star of the Sea, be gracious to poor sailors in their peril!

But another time the King bade Nicolò dive down and find out how Sicily floated on the sea, and the man brought up a fearful tale. For he said that groping to and fro in the dim abysses he saw that Sicily had rested on three pillars, whereof one had fallen, one was split and like to fall, and one only stood erect and sound! The years have gone by in many hundreds since that plunge; but no man knows whether the shattered pillar is erect.

Now the King desired to be sure that Nicolò did actually reach the bottom of the sea, and accordingly took him to the summit of a rock where the water was deepest, and there, surrounded by his courtiers, hurled a gold cup far out from the shore. The goblet flashed and sank, and the King bade Nicolò dive and bring it back.

The diver plunged, and the King waited, watching long before the surface of the sea was broken. At last Nicolò rose, brandishing the cup as he swam, and when he had reached shore and won his breath again he cried, "Oh, King, if I had known what I should see, neither this cup nor half your kingdom would have tempted me to dive." "What did you see?" the King demanded, and the diver answered that he found on the floor of the ocean four impenetrable things. First the great rush of a river which streams out of the bowels of the earth, sweeping all things away before the might of its resistless current; and next a labyrinth of rocks, whose crags overhung the winding ways between them. Then

he was beaten hither and thither by the flux and reflux of the waters out of the lowest parts of ocean; and lastly, he dared not pass the monsters which stretched out long tentacles as if to clutch him and draw him into the caverns of the rocks. So he groped and wandered in mortal fear, till at last he saw the gleam of gold upon a shelf of rock and grasped the cup and came up into the world again.

Now the King pondered long upon this story, and then taking the cup flung it into the sea once more, and bade Nicolò dive again. The fellow begged hard that he might not go, but the King was ruthless, and the waters closed over the diver. The day waned, the night came on, and still the King waited on the crag beside the sea. But Nicolò Pesce the diver was never seen again.

Many a child has thrilled over this story as told in Schiller's verse,—"Wer wagt es, Rittersman oder Knapp . . ." You ask—What is the truth of these old stories? I answer that they have neither truth nor falsity, and that is enough for most of us in this dull world, of which so much has to be purged away before the beauty can appear. The flower-laden boughs in this Villa garden go on rustling in the sunny wind; the Judas trees are gay with purple blossoms, and from the long, straight avenue, where white marble statues gleam in the cool shades, the cries and laughter of the children ring out merrily. Tell a child these tales and he will doubt nothing, reason over nothing, but accept the beauty and talk of it with quickened breath and glowing cheeks. That is the wisdom of the babes. Let us be content to copy it.

CHAPTER V

THE ENCHANTED CASTLE OF THE EGG

AND THE SUCCESSION OF THE KINGS WHO HELD IT

IN Naples one is never very far from history, and when I arose from my pleasant seat beneath the palm tree, plodding on down the long and beautiful avenue of the Villa garden I came out at no great distance on the sunny Piazza della Vittoria—a name which, I suspect, connects itself in the fancy of many visitors with some of the wild triumphs of Garibaldi. But the piazza has an older history than that. It commemorates the sea battle of Lepanto, in which Don John of Austria, the youthful son of the great Emperor Charles the Fifth and of Barbara Blomberg, washerwoman of Ratisbon, led the united fleets of Venice, Spain, and Rome into the Gulf of Lepanto as the Turks were coming out and administered a drubbing under which the throne of the Caliph rocked and tottered, all so long ago as the year 1576. Naples had the best of reasons, as I have said already, for rejoicing over any event which reduced the sea power of the Turks, and I do not doubt that the child of Kaiser and of washerwoman had an intoxicating triumph on this spot which has so long forgotten him.

At this point I hesitate, as the ass did between

two bundles, a dilemma often thrust on one in Naples. For if I turn towards my left and mount the hill, I reach the Piazza dei Martiri and the pleasant strangers' quarter. But since my aim is not to describe things known easily to all who visit Naples, but rather to talk at large of what the guide-books do not mention, I take the other way and move out on the sea-front again, just where the Via Partenope, a new road, runs towards the ancient castle at the point.

As I approach the centre of this ancient city, scene of so many bitter conflicts, it becomes the more needful to select those epochs which are most worthy to be remembered, to let all the ghosts of great names flutter by except a few, and those the few whose memories rise oftenest. The choice is easy. All the deepest tragedy of Naples closes round the fall of the House of Hohenstaufen and the fall of that of Aragon. I must explain briefly how these houses held the throne of Naples and of Sicily.

The Normans founded that kingdom in the year 1130. They won it by conquest from Lombards and from Saracens; and they placed their capital at Palermo, where their rule on the whole was just and splendid, and their throne gained lustre from Arab art and Arab learning, so that those were happy days for Italy and Sicily, held by strong sovereigns who kept in check all dangers from without. But even in the good times the seed of trouble was sprouting fast; for the first Normans, superstitious in their piety, and anxious to obtain a legal title to the lands their swords had won, accepted the feudal lordship of the Pope; and thus originated the papal claim to alter the succession of the realm at will.

The male line of the Normans failed. Constance, the heiress of the house, carried the throne to the Emperor Henry VI., son of the great Barbarossa, and as resolved as he to turn into realities the shadowy claims of the Emperors to the overlordship of all Italy. But the Popes already claimed the universal spiritual dominion, as the Emperors claimed the temporal; and since in the rough-thinking minds of men there was but little comprehension of the theoretical distinction between the dominions of spirit and of matter, it happened often that even in the understanding of Pope and Kaiser themselves the difference was lost, and the two claims worked out to rivalry and the clash of interests which wrought much bloodshed.

There was not room in Italy for two universal rulers, both holding of God, even though one ruled spiritual things and the other temporal. The theory was clear, but who could interpret the practice on all occasions? Every Pope was greedy for temporalities; and no Kaiser, unless wholly occupied in taming rebellious barons beyond the Alps, could refrain from meddling with spiritual affairs. Thus arose two parties throughout Italy, and all the land was cleft with the feuds of Guelf and Ghibelline, the former holding to the Pope, the latter dreaming, as Dante did, of the days when the Emperor should descend from the Alps again brandishing the sword of judgment, and purge away the foulness from the lovely cities which stood oppressed and mourning. Day and night, in the fancy of the great Florentine, Rome lay weeping, widowed and alone, calling constantly, "Cesare mio, why hast thou deserted me?"

More often than not the Emperors did not come, and the Pope grew ever stronger. But when the successor of St. Peter saw his great rival established

by natural inheritance in the territory which was not only the fairest of all Italy, but also the one over which he claimed feudal rights, it was certain that there could be no peace ; and the conflict might have broken out at once had not the Emperor died and his widow granted the Church great power over her young son, whom the Pope might naturally hope to mould into what he would.

But the lad grew up strong and self-reliant, a noble and a splendid monarch, worthy of the fame which clings to this day about the name of the Emperor Frederick the Second. Alone of all the line of Western Emperors this one lived by choice in Italy. He loved the blue sea and the purple mountains which guard the land of Sicily. His heart was in the white coast towns of Apulia and the ranges of long low hills which look towards the Adriatic over the flat plains of Foggia, where the hawks wheel screaming in the clear air and the great mountain shrine of Monte Gargano towers blue and dim above the heel of Italy. He loved the Arab art and learning. He was no mean poet—a troubadour, moreover; and withal a just and upright ruler, with aims far greater than those of the age in which he lived, a monarch born for the happiness of nations, had only the Pope been able to bate a little of his pride and tolerate the rival at his gates.

But those were days in which the Popes would endure no compromise; and from the hour in which he entered man's estate to that in which he laid down his weary life in an Apulian castle, Frederick was in continual warfare with the Church. Had he lived, who knows how that struggle might have ended, or by what devices the prince who was Emperor as well as King, and had the prestige of the Holy Roman

Empire at his back, might have met the dangers gathering round his kingdom? For the Pope was negotiating with other princes, offering them the inheritance of Naples if they would but turn the Hohenstaufen out; and at length, after an English prince had refused the enterprise, Charles of Anjou took it up, brother of St. Louis, and a man accounted the first warrior of his age. By this time the kingdom of the Two Sicilies had passed to Manfred, the favourite child of Frederick the Second, though born of an unlawful union. There was a child in Germany of lawful blood, one Conradin; but he was still playing with his mother, and of no age to stem the troubles of the kingdom. Moreover, he was reported dead, and Manfred seized the throne with the goodwill of the people, who loved him well, and keep his memory unto this day; for he was handsome and gallant, "Bello e biondo" the Apulians call him still, a king whom a man might follow and a woman love, and, but for the Pope and his restless enmity, Manfred also, like his father, might have made the happiness of a whole people.

But Charles of Anjou descended suddenly and met Manfred in battle outside Benevento. It was the 26th of February, in the year 1266. Manfred, watching the battle from a hillock, saw his troops waver; and suspecting treachery, which was indeed abroad that day, he rushed into the thickest of the fight, and was slain by an unknown hand as he strove to rally his Apulians.

That day there fell before the French spears not only a noble king, but the peace and happiness of southern Italy. Charles of Anjou was a grim and ruthless tyrant, whose conceptions of mercy and justice were those of a hawk hovering above a hen-coop. He denied burial to the body of his enemy,

and caused it to be flung naked on the banks of the river, where every soldier as he passed cast a stone at it. He seized Manfred's luckless queen, Helena, and kept her prisoner with her children until death released them. He overthrew good laws and set up bad ones. He sought to stamp out loyalty to the old kings by exile and the sword. In Sicily he wrought unutterable woe, such as in the end turned the blood of every islander to fire and his heart to stone, and produced a massacre from which no Frenchman escaped. All the world knows that great act of retribution by the name of the Sicilian Vespers.

But in the meantime Conradin had grown up to tall boyhood, and his heart was already brave enough to rage when he saw his kingdom in the hands of a cruel conqueror, and his own subjects slain and banished because they loved his house. His mother wept, but the boy did what any brave boy of kingly blood would do. I will tell the tale of that great tragedy later, when I reach the square outside the Carmine where the last scene was played out, and the boy-king lost the game, but carried all the honours with him from the world, leaving eternal infamy for a heritage to the foe who slew him.

So Charles of Anjou possessed the kingdom. But it brought no happiness to him or to his race. His own days were tortured by the loss of Sicily, and every one of those who followed him reigned uneasily. Even his grandson Robert, called "The Wise," is suspected of having won the throne by murder. Robert's granddaughter, Queen Giovanna, whose sweet memory we found on the slopes of the Posilipo, was privy to the murder of her husband, and was herself smothered with a pillow. The other Joanna, who followed her, was the most profligate

woman of her age, and in her ended, meanly and sordidly, the line of Anjou sovereigns.

Then came the House of Aragon, which had reigned in Sicily ever since the Vespers, and now expelled the last scion of Anjou and established a kingdom which seemed likely to be stable. But the claims of the royal house of France were only dormant; and before the end of the century they started up again, eager and adventurous, in the heart of the young King, Charles the Eighth. It was the wily Duke of Milan, Ludovic Sforza, named the Moor, who incited this young man to lead the French chivalry through the passes of the Alps. He was the warder of Italy, and he betrayed her. It would be hard to name any one act of man since God divided light from darkness which has let loose upon the world such tremendous consequences of woe.

It is not my duty here to describe those consequences, nor to tell how the French invasion resulted very shortly in riveting on Naples the long Spanish slavery, which in the middle of the last century became a monarchy again, and in 1860 was torn from the hold of the Bourbons, and made free at last, by the grace of God and the valour of true heroes, each one of whom dared all for Italy.

"Blessed is he of all men, being in one
As father to her and son,
Blessed of all men living, that he found
Her weak limbs bared and bound,
And in his arms and in his bosom bore,
And as a garment wore
Her weight of want, and as a royal dress
Put on her weariness.

"Praise him, O storm and summer, shore and wave,
O skies, and every grave;
O weeping hopes, O memories beyond tears,
O many and murmuring years."

I will quote no more, even of these immortal verses. Since it was given to an English singer to voice the rapture with which all good men hailed the salvation of Italy, it is but just that every visitor should read the "Song of Italy" himself. I would that everyone among them had it by heart and could catch some thrill from the noble passion of the verses.

This has been a long discourse. But if certain things happened a great while ago, is it my fault? Or again, am I to blame for the strange neglect of Italian history in schools? The lesson is done now, and the sun is still bright and hot on the Via Partenope. Even the enchanted Castle of the Egg, black and grim as it usually looks, has caught the glow, and is steeped and drowned in warm light. A quiver of haze hangs over the sea, tremulous and burning. The wind has dropped, and a midday silence has descended upon Naples. It is the hour when sacristans bar the church doors and seek the solace of slumber, when the vetturini congregate on the shady side of the piazza and cease to crack their whips at the sight of strangers. On the castle bridge a sentry paces to and fro. There are one or two restaurants below him in the shadow, neither good nor bad, but good enough; and I order my colazione in one which looks towards the sheer cliff of the Pizzofalcone, and from which towards my right I can look out upon the harbour, can catch a glimpse of the Castel Nuovo, the old royal dwelling of the Houses of Anjou and Aragon, and see beyond it the old city bathed in sunshine sloping to the curving sea.

The Pizzofalcone is the Falcon's Beak. If it were not too hot to think much about anything, I might perhaps detect the resemblance. But at this hour, in this city, and in face of this sun, one does not think;

one sits and lets half realised ideas drift past as they will. The Pizzofalcone looks to me much like any other cliff, rather dangerously near the castle, which could easily be dominated from the height by even the smallest modern guns. There was once a villa of the Roman Lucullus on that height. Statesman and epicure, he had another on this island; or perhaps the two formed part of a single domain, which must have been rarely lovely in those days when waving pine trees filled the hollows of the cliff and the sea broke white and creamy on the strand of Santa Lucia. It was not this handsome quay stretching on beyond the castle which set the Neapolitans singing—

"Oh, dolce Napoli,
Oh, suol beato."

For the truth is that modern works of engineering have not yet proved as prolific in poetry as the abuses they replace, and the Neapolitans have not written about their sea-wall any song one half so sweet as that which was inspired by the pretty, solitary creek outside the city bounds, bad as it is understood to have been in morals. There were, and are still, caverns all along the cliffs of Santa Lucia which were sad places in the old day, full of riotous and evil people who resorted thither for the worst of ends. For this reason Don Pietro di Toledo, when he was Viceroy, ruined some and closed others, by which act he at once improved the morals of Naples and enriched its folklore, for nothing stimulated the imagination of the people so much as the idea that their caverns were lying empty and silent. They believe now that some are the haunt of witches, while others are filled with treasure. One or two are worth seeing still if a guide can be found to show them.